

APRIL 1916

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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the twenty-third of the month preceding its date, and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands, or on railway trains, a notification to the Publishers will be appreciated.

ADVERTISING FORMS close three weeks prior to the time of issue. Advertising rates on application.

THE RED BOOK CORPORATION, Publisher, North American Building, CHICAGO

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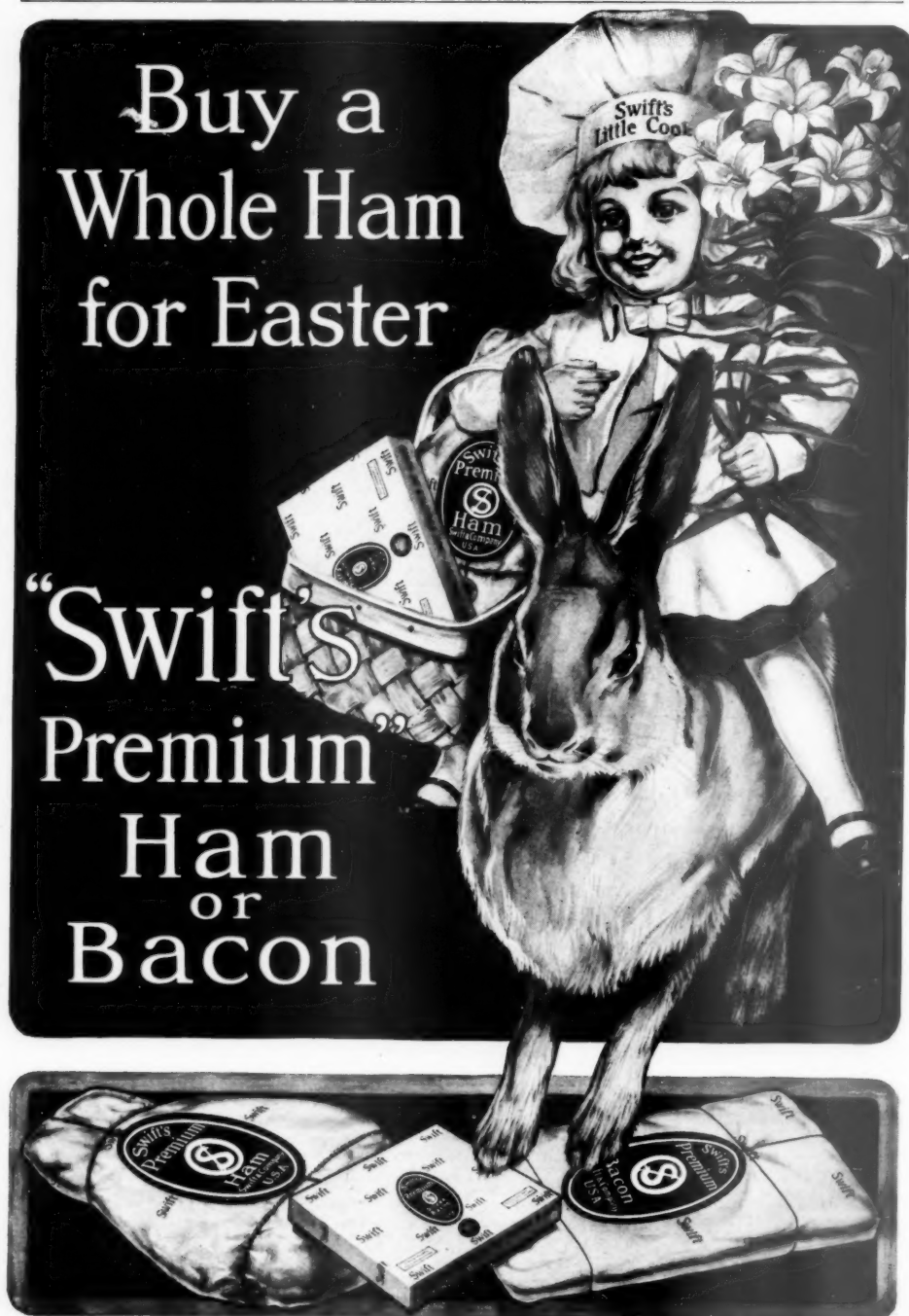
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RALPH K. STRASSMAN, Advertising Manager, 1172 Fifth Avenue Building, New York.

R. M. PURVES, New England Representative, 201 Devonshire St., Boston. LONDON OFFICES, 5 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C.
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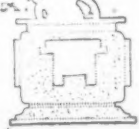


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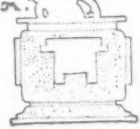


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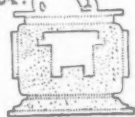


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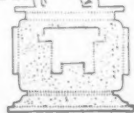
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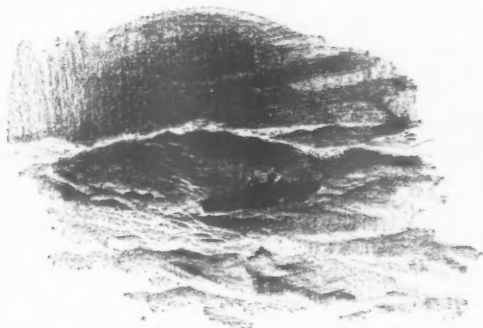
Factories at Ivorydale, Ohio; Port Ivory, New York; Kansas City, Kansas; Hamilton, Canada

April
1916

THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XXVI
No. 6

RAY LONG, Editor



The

San Bernardino Meridian

By John Fleming Wilson

Author of "Junk," "The Woman He Wanted to Forget," etc.


I HAD heard of him infrequently, and yet I was familiar with his character, as I supposed. A nickname, especially if applied to an old master mariner, is always a frank, sometimes an impolite, description.

Who on the Pacific Coast has not heard of "Hog" Melisander, the truculent skipper of the *San Mateo*, who got his appellation from his trade, which was the conveying of pigs from various smaller ports to the central market in San Francisco? And "Goosey" Gander,

ILLUSTRATED BY
WM. OBERHARDT

of the barkentine *Ruth*? No one who had ever met him could forget the strange hiss which emphasized his lightest word, or the queer double-armed gesture with which he howled his commands from the poop in time of stress.

Therefore, when I heard of "Farmer" Granger, I recognized that the nickname must not be a mere tautology, but indeed a bit of plain speaking. It was evident that he was not a typical seaman; it was possible that he was contemptible in the exercise of his chosen profession. I put him down as a man

AS a people we worship speed. Our trains, automobiles, street-cars, our business deals, dances, plays—all must *move*. Especially we demand speed in our stories. And we get it. Writers to-day tell more in a paragraph than those of the last generation told in a page. Just the same, it is a rare joy, now and then, to find a story told with the leisurely charm of a yarn spun by a friend at your fireside. That is why we believe you are going to delight in this story. Mr. Wilson tells it as it might be told by one just home from long journeys. There is no tensely dramatic point, no love story, no play of big emotion of any kind. But there is fine character-building; you feel the roll of the Pacific under a straining deck; and we venture to say that you will have learned something of human nature when you come to the end. 

who did not belong, as the Chinese say.

Thus I ticketed him, and nothing that came to my ears during a decade changed my reckoning. He was master now of one ignoble vessel, then of another. I fancy that he captained half the disreputables on the Pacific—without disaster, it is true, but also without having the credit of getting his name into the papers for a minor feat of seamanship. There was nothing except his nickname to prove that he had ever made the slightest impression on a single soul of all the hundreds with whom he must have come into contact. Now, having met him and sailed with him, he stands out before my eyes as a really tremendous fellow, a character of incredible strength and persistence, a man cast in an heroic mold. And when all is said, his nickname was at once a description and a prophecy.

I find two succinct entries in my note-book under the title "*Capt. Granger*." The first is of the date April 4, 1908:

HONOLULU — "Farmer" Granger, master of the ss. *Makoa'hule*, in port this day from Port Townsend. Came to *Commerc'l-Advertiser* office and asked for 3 pkgs of Gov't seeds. Dug up 2 radishes and 1 onion for him. Much pleased. Man is evidently mildly insane. Nothing of seafarer about him, yet is vaguely reported to have once been bucko mate out of Maine. Told me he was going to *grow* the seeds. Query: Where? Cleared for Manila.

The second note I have is of last year—very brief:

SAN DIEGO — Postcard from Farmer Granger gives address as T 5 North R 8 West S. B. M. (San Bernardino Meridian). At last! Will go and see him.

There should be a final entry. Let it be this story.

IN the exercise (if so strong a word be applicable to so mild an endeavor) of my profession of reporter on a Honolulu daily paper, it was my privilege to meet and interview many famous, eccentric and disreputable people. Of the first class I fear I recall only a few names; of the second, some foibles or oddities. My memory is unluckily replete with the histories of the last, from the broken-down skipper who periodically pawned his schooner for square-face gin, to the old prima donna who resumed her place in the limelight now and then by appearing uninvited at funerals and singing—in spite of the decorous protests of the mourners—tearful lyrics of lost popularity. I believe that to this day I know the secrets of a hundred respectable closets, told me by the erring and the lost. Only the other day a most upright and esteemed citizen of no mean city spoke a name which I had

heard whispered huskily in my ear in the starry dusk of Kalihi-uka.

"My brother," said the respectable citizen, "in the diplomatic service abroad. He died while on a mission to the Orient."

I was silent. Why speak out the bitter truth?—that I had known that brother "on a mission to the Orient" and had never forgotten a hoarse whisper: "I say, old chap, m' folks are Phar-phair-*phar*'shees, all right. . . . respectable pharishes with broad ply-phylact-er-lacteries. Name of. . . . MY name. I'm prodigal son—prodigalest son of a gun you ever see. Short history: woman, divorced; wine, all drunk; song, all sung."

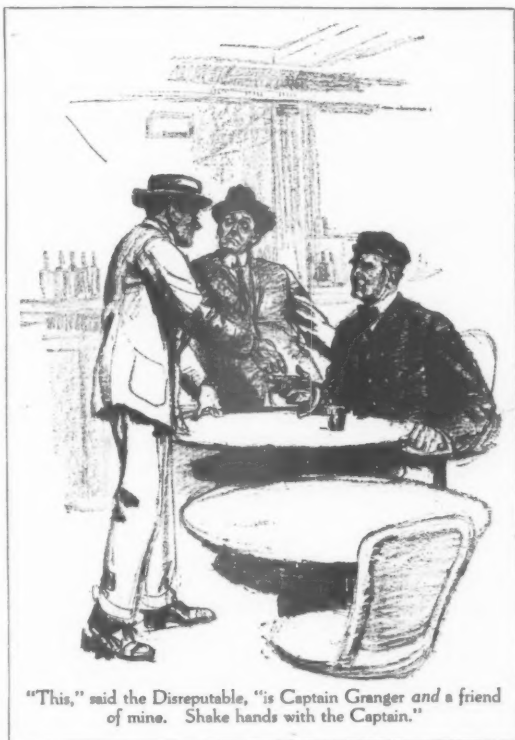
The prodigal son is indeed dead, on that "mission to the Orient." I recall him because an hour after his lisping confession he became insolent, informed me that he was still not friendless and dragged me unwillingly across the dirty *lanai* of the cheap inn and introduced me to one who very evidently did not belong there, a clean-shaven, solidly built, sober-faced man who expressed no irritation at being slapped on the back by the ne'er-do-well.

"This," said the Disreputable, "is Captain Granger and a friend of mine. Shake hands with the Captain!"

I did so, quite ashamed of being seen in such company.

"Farmer Granger," persisted the scapegrace, becoming exceedingly and uncomfortably articulate under the influence of gin.

I instantly placed the man as the one I had heard of casually. As he seemed not at all annoyed at the nickname, I took the liberty of examining him closely. I thought I detected an unseamanlike strain in him. He was austere, yet without the sailor's hearty good-nature ashore. He was not a man who



"This," said the Disreputable, "is Captain Granger and a friend of mine. Shake hands with the Captain."

glanced quickly about him, nor seemed concerned, as seafarers usually are, about the sky, the wind, the sound of the surf on the beach. He gave me the impression of being interminably leisurely, of having nothing to do in hand, of taking matters at ease. Yet he displayed no sense of pleasure in idleness and was as preoccupied as possible.

"Just in from sea?" I suggested.

"Yes," he said in a dry, formal tone.

"I'm a reporter," I said. "Any news?"

Captain Granger brightened. "This is a territory, isn't it? With a delegate in Congress?"

"Yes," I admitted; "why?"

"Seeds," he answered, "—Government seeds. I am trying all the new varieties."

"Except seeds of kindness," said the Disreputable, in a clear voice. "No samples from the Government of *them*. Strictly an annual. Sow in the spring of

youth and no harvest in the winter of our discontent."

The Captain's reply to this botanical dictum was to lay a half-dollar on the table without a word. It vanished to the prestidigitating palm of the waiter.

"I tried bush peas last time. . . . got the seeds in Oregon," the Skipper continued.

"Grow them at sea?" I demanded.

"In a bucket," he replied. "But peas do not flourish in a saline soil. Now, asparagus is a marine plant, and. . . ."

THE east suddenly glowed and morning was come. Belated conscience pricked me. I rose and mentioned the fact that I must away to bed. Captain Granger rose with me and shook hands.

"I'll call at the newspaper office before I sail," he told me. "If your delegate has sent you the usual allowance of seeds, please let me have some."

I promised, and fled to catch the first car down the hill and to the city. As I rolled past the Kamehameha schools I said to myself that Farmer Granger was an odd fish. Likely he was a crank. His ship was probably a dirty packet. Later I allowed myself to wonder how the Disreputable had made acquaintance with the man. Granger did not look like a boon companion for such as he. I voted both of them bores.

That afternoon who should invade the sanctum but the Captain. He was mildly glad to see me again and shamelessly mentioned the Disreputable with a prefixed, "Er. . . . I forget his name?"

"He goes by the name of Black, in Hawaii *nei*," I said.

"No matter. Er. . . . Black has done me a good turn in introducing me to you. Did you remember the seeds?"

I had not, but I thought it needless to say so. Instead, I consulted the librarian, an indefatigable collector of trash. It was quite possible that he had seeds. I tried to recollect whether our delegate—a duke of the blood royal—ever had availed himself of his privileges as a voteless legislator so far as to have seeds sent to his constituents. The librarian enlightened me.

"The Prince sent us everything," he remarked in his elderly tones. "The

Alaska wheat went to the big island. The early turnips I fed to my parrot. But I think I have a few packages left." He delved, and emerged from a drawer dusty and triumphant. "Two radishes and one onion," he announced. "Who wants them? They won't grow, you know!"

"A sea captain. . . . Captain Granger."

"Ah! Not *Farmer* Granger?" cackled the librarian.

"The same, I understand."

"With my compliments to Captain Granger," was the reply. "I wish I had more."

I duly presented the librarian's compliments, with the seeds. Granger nodded, and studied the inscriptions on the packages with absorbed interest.

"He told me they wouldn't grow, you know," I suggested.

"Likely not," was the undisturbed response. "They seldom do." He held a packet at arm's length and examined the rude, colored depiction of a bulbous and unwholesome radish. My unspoken comment was that the Skipper was farsighted, a common infirmity in elderly seamen.

"I procured some excellent watermelon seeds in Chile last year," he remarked, presently putting the packets in his pocket. "I assure you the fruit was remarkable. I had great success with watermelons. I was led to believe that nitrate is good for them. My ship was loaded with nitrates. A most fortunate coincidence, wasn't it? I assure you the melons were extraordinarily fine."

"So you're ship's gardener as well as skipper?" I suggested humorously.

He nodded his head calmly. "It does no harm."

"Certainly not. By the way, have you any news. . . . apart from vegetables?"

"Nothing," he said abruptly. "I sail for Manila to-night. On my return I shall tell you about some things I have in mind."

THE most matter-of-fact things are the very ones we do not expect to happen. There could be nothing extraordinary in Farmer Granger's returning from Manila, and yet I confess to have been

astonished when he walked into the newspaper office one warm night in September.

"Just in," he informed me, seating himself by my desk, after a polite look around the room.

"Name of vessel?" I inquired, pulling some copy-paper toward me.

"*Makoahule*," he returned.

"Cargo?"

"Mahogany."

"Sailed from Manila?" I proceeded.

"August first, for Los Angeles harbor."

"Any news?" I insisted.

It appeared that there was none, unless one counted a typhoon which was strictly seasonable. "Down in the almanac," was the way he put it.

"Any damage to your steamer?" I inquired, as a matter of form.

"Well, not to speak of," he told me.

"Expecting it, we were prepared." He nodded thoughtfully, and presently added: "Some were not."

"Who were not?"

Granger was really uncomfortable. He shifted uneasily in his chair and shook his head. "A misfortune," he muttered.

I scented news and insisted on his telling me what he referred to. He flushed, made a dozen kinds of apology for the unmentioned people, and at last admitted that he had picked up the crew of the Swedish steamer *Oceania*, which had foundered at sea.

"Where did you land them?" I asked.

He had transferred them to a mailboat bound for Hongkong. He gave me to understand that he did not see the use

of recording other people's mishaps. It had been, he said, an error on the part of the *Oceania's* crew. Accidents would happen.

"It is news," I told him, with all the earnestness of a man to whom news is sacred. He was not impressed. He grew almost angry.

"Because a man makes a mistake is no reason he should be held up to public scorn," he said.

"Then the skipper of the *Oceania* made a mistake!" I triumphed. "Better and better! Now I am interested indeed. What was his mistake, Captain?"

I expected nothing less than a tale of a man's cowardice, his helplessness or his terrible error. Instead, I found that Captain Granger had nothing special to relate. The "mistake" was in losing one's ship under any circumstances. He seemed to ignore, as a master mariner,

the Act of God quoted by owners and the underwriters. He allowed me to perceive that he thought the expression a quibbling excuse, good enough for people ashore but not applicable to events as seen by sailormen. Wrecks were "mistakes." And while I listened to his dry exposition of this belief I felt convinced that this rather absurd elderly skipper was right. However, his doctrine was weakened in its effect by my recollection of the seed episode. And if Farmer Granger



"The seeds hardly had a fair chance."

did not presently bring that up, of his own accord!

"I believe no more seeds have come from Washington," I informed him.

"I'll get some in California," he remarked.

"What success did you have with the radishes and onions?" I inquired.

"The seeds hardly had a fair chance," he said apologetically. "I had to plant them in what soil I could get. It happened to be mostly coral. I thought to enrich this by mixing it with potato-water. The result was a growth of fungus which destroyed the original plants if they germinated at all."

"I should think a ship was the last place in the world to try out seeds," I remarked.

"You are perfectly right, sir. But what can I do? I am rarely in port long enough to make garden, if I had one, and I haven't, at this writing."

I changed the subject by referring to the Disreputable's demise. Granger was genuinely grieved.

"He is a positive example of the danger of carrying things too far," he said. "He should have retired years ago."

"Retired?" I echoed. "What do you mean, Captain? No man ever was so completely retired, as you term it, as he. He had attained the very depths of obscurity."

"Precisely. But look what he had been, sir! I told him when I first met him that he should prepare for a change. I told him the exact truth, sir."

For a reason unknown now to myself, I asked the bland, unanswerable question: "What is the truth?"

For the first time—so far as I am aware—the tremendous query found an answer. Captain Granger stated it in the most commonplace fashion, with all the air of giving voice to a platitude: "Every man must live for something besides what he is doing."

"An idea?" I suggested.

"He had ideas," the Captain said simply. "No matter. He lived for what he was doing, and when it no longer was to be done, he was finished."

"I see the point. . . . in his case," I acknowledged. "I don't see my way clear to agreement with your whole generalization, though."

"Well," he continued, in a burst of confidence, "take some one else. Take. . . well, take the captain of the *Oceania*, sir. When he came aboard after losing his ship, the poor man was despondent, almost in tears. 'What will I do?' he asked me, time and time again.

"And then I found out that, in truth, the poor fellow could do nothing else but sail a ship. His vessel

was gone, and he was in despair. I pitied him, sir."

"Couldn't he get another command?" I inquired.

"That is not the question," was the curt reply. "Possibly he could; it is possible that some one might trust him again. But if not? The man was adrift."

"I suppose if you lost your steamer you'd turn your hand to. . . ."

"I do not expect to lose my ship," he returned briefly. "I meant to infer that no thoughtful man is tied up to one thing. Going to sea is all right, of course. But one must prepare for a change."

"And our Disreputable friend. . . . can we say that he lost his ship? or did it simply wear out in service?"

Let Farmer Granger sum up the history of the prodigal whom we knew.



We all looked up at the sky.

"The man was forever on the move. First, some petty Government job that took him from home. Then his abilities got him into the consular line, later into the diplomatic circle. He was always being sent somewhere, always expecting to be sent, not hoping, even, to remain anywhere. It is a peculiarity of the promotion in that business that it takes a man always farther from home. One gets to count on being a little farther away from home each move. I saw the effect of this on our . . . er . . . friend. I told him it was dangerous, this moving along. 'It can't last forever,' I said. 'Some day you will stop. You ought to live for the time when you stop. Prepare for it.'

"My advice was unheeded. He acted precisely as he always had done, expecting to move along and away. It makes a man careless of what he does. It makes him a man of temporary affairs. Steadiness doesn't count. What does it matter, so long as next year will see you somewhere else? A woman, let us say, in the case? Next year one can write her a letter, explaining. Too much liquor? One will reach the next place with a fresh reputation. So it goes. And when the stop comes, there one is, stuck fast when one ought to be moving, like a ship becalmed. The man's anchor was hardly down before he was asking himself: 'What's my next port-of-call?' He ended by not knowing when he had reached his last port and sailed without any destination whatever. Naturally that was the end of him."

BEFORE he left, Captain Granger called on me once more. He had put off his departure on account of a threatened *kona*. In the terrific stifling heat he spoke measuredly to me about the usefulness of the Weather Bureau.

"I don't go much on storm warnings," he remarked. "Weather is pretty much seasonable, of course. But when warnings are given, I think it a man's duty to obey them."

"Then you don't expect a hurricane?"

He did not. He had not observed certain signs which he considered absolutely inseparable from a true *kona*. "But," he concluded sagely, "I may be wrong. The

least I can do is to stay in port till the danger is over."

In due time the flags no longer flew and Honolulu breathed again. I was much amazed to find the *Makoahule* had not sailed with the others. Granger did not call; so I went down to his steamer to inquire the reason of the delay. I found him deep in calculations based on some hundreds of old barometric charts. He seemed rather averse to explaining himself. I discovered that he was fully convinced that the *kona* was coming, without official warning, and that he felt that his predicting it, when the Weather Bureau was calm, reflected unjustly on an upright and industrious branch of the Government.

"After all," he told me earnestly, "I may be mistaken. But it would be foolish in me to ignore my own opinion in the matter."

The next day proved that Granger was exceedingly right. When the *Makoahule* did sail, she was alone, and a silent throng watched her go through the Pass, knowing that on her devolved the task of saving what there was to be saved beyond the still-heaving horizon. Ten days later the cable told us the meager story of Farmer Granger's careful, painstaking search of the devastated seas and its result in salvage; for the first time the man's name was mentioned with encomiums. Then it disappeared again from our columns. I half forgot him.

THE years passed, and once more I found myself in Honolulu, amusedly viewing the life of which I had once been a small, unimportant part. It seemed trifling and unimpressive. I took refuge, between steamers, in recalling the former days, and the people with whom I had made acquaintance. . . . as utterly gone as the hours we spent together. Among my memories was that of Farmer Granger. I but faintly recollected his real feats, and dwelt on his inexplicable and preposterous demands for Government seeds. . . . in small packets. Probably it was the nickname again, suggestive and definitive.

There was nothing extraordinary in the man's turning up, of course. But I made quite an occasion of it: went down

to see him on his ship. He remembered me perfectly, he said, and he was hospitable. As usual, he was without news. Though he had traversed many seas since our parting, he had, apparently, witnessed nothing worth recalling. He had been in London for six weeks. . . . an adventure, surely; he spoke of nothing except the Kew Gardens. He had made a dozen excursions to this place and held that it was "informing."

"And now where are you bound?" I asked.

"I am waiting to turn this steamer over to another captain," he said briefly.

I ventured a condolence. He hastily rejected it. He was returning to the Coast. He had no time to take the ship to Tasmania. He did not tell me the reason for his haste to get back to California. I suspected a love-affair.

ONE fine morning the news arrived that the next steamer to sail for San Francisco, the *Bangkok*, would not sail. She had run ashore on a reef in the Inland Sea. My own departure must be postponed until a fortnight later. I was indignant and roundly blamed the unlucky skipper of the *Bangkok*. I did not spare words when I ran into Granger.

"Most unfortunate," he told me. "I was going up on her myself. In fact, I am in a most awkward situation! I must be in California by the tenth of April."

"This is the twenty-fifth of March, too."

"Sixteen days," he muttered. "The *Bangkok* would have arrived in plenty of time—on the sixth of next month." He fixed his eyes on me with a sudden dogged expression I had never seen him assume. "I must manage it," he said.

As I had investigated all the chances of getting up to the Coast before the next mail-boat, I didn't take Granger seriously, though I supposed that he might possibly, through his position, get passage on an oil-tanker for Monterey. But the man was not easily balked, and, strangely enough, he counted our past friendship as still binding upon him. He wakened me at midnight in my hotel with the news that he was leaving for

San Francisco on the morning tide and I would go with him.

"It is the *Fiery Cross*," he told me.

The announcement thoroughly roused me. "That old tub?" I shouted. "She never was any good. Her crew—kanakas at that—mutinied on her last cruise down South. She has been condemned even for the missionary cause."

"She has been sold up the Coast," he said simply. "They have been merely waiting for some one to take her up."

I recited a brief history of the old steamer, most emphatically. Granger was unmoved. "I have to be in California by the tenth of April."

"You'll never get there on her," I retorted.

He was really hurt at my attitude. I made amends by agreeing to accompany him. In the small hours of the morning we embarked, and at dawn Granger ordered the anchor up. Three hours later we were abreast of Koko Head, steaming slowly into a fresh northeaster. Already the *Fiery Cross* was affirming my harsh words. The hands, a sullen, half-sober crowd, were preparing to make a demand that we put back to Honolulu.

"And ye can't blame them, sir," grumbled the mate, wiping his straggling mustache free of brine. "She aint seaworthy, and that's fact; and she aint found with the proper stores, either. What if it comes on to blow off the Coast?"

"Very likely," Granger answered.

"Then ye *will* turn back, sir?"

"Certainly not."

That was all there was to it. Before the night came, blowy, splendid with stars, I felt that the Captain was respected in the eyes of the crew. "Farmer" he might be; there was nothing more said about returning to port. In the musty cabin under the bridge which I shared with Granger I spoke of the ease with which he had overridden the demands.

"The men don't know what they want," he responded. "Now, I do know what I want. Naturally, they do what I say. However. . . ."

I met his gaze and wondered. He

seemed on the point of making me a confidant. I was silent. At last he came out with a "It will be a hard trip."

There is nothing so discouraging to handle as a worn-out vessel. In the best of weather she develops fresh complaints which rapidly fall into serious diseases. One never feels safe for a moment. Precaution is vain, remedies useless and resignation a virtue. The *Fiery Cross* within four days was what the chief engineer termed "a constructive wreck." She leaked gently and pervasively; her ancient frames yielded to every movement; her engines ran hot; her steering-gear was a joke; she barely maintained a speed of six knots an hour.

The only person on board who did not worry was the Captain. He methodically took notice of every new disaster and modified his orders accordingly. In reality he did not seem to be concerned.

"Th' old man is all right," the mate rasped in my ear one night. "I know he's all right, for I sailed with him once before. But he's never been up against this kind of a game before. He's had bottoms under him and a handhold above. This packet is melting away like ice in the Gulf Stream. I wonder how he'll take it when she does begin to go down."

"Then you think our chances are poor?"

The mate leaned over the bridge rail and scowled into the darkness below. When he looked around again I saw the dim outline of his face set in a grimace. "Chances?" he repeated. "It's a certainty for us!"

IT was the next noon that Granger displayed the first symptoms of annoyance. He went over his reckonings the third time and reluctantly entered his figures in the log. Then he sent for the chief engineer.

"What's the matter with your engines?" he demanded.

"They'd be all right," was the reply, "if they were in

something. I'm looking for the thrust-block to quit any moment. When the propeller comes home, it'll bring the whole stern of her with it."

"Then you can't turn up any faster?"

"Not without orders from you, sir," was the significant response. Granger nodded. Then he said quietly: "It's coming on to blow. . . . *hard*."

We all looked up at the sky, I think. You may imagine us, standing on the crazy bridge with our earnest, inquiring faces turned up to the heavens. And they, blank and omenless, baffled our searching eyes. Yet none of us questioned the fact asserted by the Skipper. The mate made a single, reproachful comment:

"And there aint any wireless aboard."

Granger nodded stiffly, as much as to say, "I know that."

In the afternoon I grew cheerful; there was no sign whatever of an approaching gale; the sea rolled evenly from horizon to horizon, steadily and powerfully; overhead the cloudless sky echoed merely the rushing flood of the Trades. I con-

The hands, a sullen, half-sober crowd, were preparing to demand that we put back to Honolulu.



fided to the mate my opinion that our commander was in the wrong. To my surprise he dissented.

"He's too d—d right most of the time," he said gloomily.

"How's the barometer?" I inquired.

"Oh, that?" he returned, and was silent. He gave me to understand, without uttering a sound, that meteorological instruments were valueless in the presence of the conviction of a Granger.

"IF that storm don't come pretty soon, it'll be too late," the mate remarked as the sun rose swiftly and evenly the next morning. We both stared at a slender film of vapor that flowed from the swaying funnel, showing that the boilers were yielding.

"It is coming," Granger said gravely, his gray head bare to the wind.

"Where from, sir?"

"From the southerly," he replied, as positively as if it were already upon us.

My skepticism held until almost noon. By then the *Fiery Cross* was slowly developing a new motion, a peculiar lurching for which there was no visible cause.

Granger kept the bridge, studying the behavior of the steamer as the swell increased in power and her movements became more erratic. Many times I saw his eyes rest on the swaying masts, as if calculating how long they could stand the tremendous swing and sharp recovery of the vessel.

It was midafternoon when the mate called my attention to a spot in the northern sky. It was like a thinning of

the atmosphere, like an abrasion by the wind of a tenuous and fragile material.

"Then it will come from the north," I remarked.

"No," he responded. "You will see, presently."

Almost as he spoke, the southerly horizon lost its clarity of outline, and a faint dimness spread over the blue of the heavens, thickening rapidly and taking on a heavier hue. The sea darkened under it. The declining sun grew ruddy, assumed a distorted shape, rode awhile amid the dense vapor and was swallowed up. The wind ceased to blow and the waves ran hurriedly without crests. The *Fiery Cross* tumbled wildly onward, plunging heavily now and again.

"We'll get our northing easily enough," the Captain remarked seriously.

"Sure!" replied the mate. "Twenty-four hours of this, and we'll be up in thirty, if the old hooker'll stand up that long."

"We can't run before it," Granger responded calmly. "We'll just ride it out." He outlined his plan briefly, the mate and the chief engineer nodding their hoar heads in assent.

It seemed to me that precious moments were being wasted. The gale was coming fast, and still these three men made no motion, stood in useless council under the very stroke of disaster. What could they be thinking of, I demanded of myself, thus to delay? And when they at last separated, and the mate blew his shrill whistle and went forward with his men leaping around him, I fairly cursed the tardiness that had made any attempt

to save us too late. Granger observed my temper and mildly reproved me. "There is plenty of time to do things right," he said. "If they aren't done right the first time, we sha'n't have a second chance."



"Go away!" I shouted at her.

I watched proceedings with a feeling of increasing sickness of heart. The mate was preparing a sea anchor, and freight cables broke under his handling, canvas tore, the crew worked in a mud-dle. Then the absolute cessation of the wind got on my nerves. Far up in the sky a dull roaring showed that the gale was already afloat above us. When would it descend?

It came just before sundown, in sudden darkness and a tumult of waters. One moment we were in the hollow of a great calm; in an instant we were clutched in the terrific grasp of death. I realized that I had never suspected the monstrous strength of wind. I was breathless, without power to move, clinging with every ounce of my muscle to my handhold on the bridge rail. I could not even turn my head so as to see Granger, a dozen feet away.

I tried to comfort myself presently by saying that the *Fiery Cross* was still afloat, though the gale was already at its full strength. We were alive, even though the hurricane had dashed upon us at its climax. In the dense, spray-shot darkness I saw the laboring form of our steamer still intact. Surely no gale could maintain such a pitch of violence without let-up. I momentarily awaited a relaxation.

Incredible as it was, I had to acknowledge before long that the extraordinary might of the tempest was increasing. From a motionless, taut figure I was being made into a being vibrating under the unspeakable thrill of the wind. In my very vitals I felt the sonance of the storm. My face involuntarily assumed contortions beyond my control. I was aware that I was screaming—yet my own ears heard nothing but the prodigious thunder of the hurricane.

I HAVE no recollection of the passage of the hours of that night. I must have been but semi-conscious. It is beyond my power to say anything of what measures Granger took to effect our salvation. I was sensible of nothing but the bludgeonings of that tremendous wind until, in some enormous darkness, I finally lost my grip on whatever I clung to, was spun around helplessly,

and suddenly found myself in shelter. I managed to perceive that I was in the chartroom. Once sure of my locality, I yielded to the motion of the steamer and was flung into a corner on a lounge.

The dawn came like a mere dim lighting of an inferno. There was not illumination enough for me to see the time on the face of the clock across from me. I attempted to release myself from the cramped position I was in, and achieved a painful tumble, ending up in another corner, where I huddled in despair. I remember that I was unduly astonished that the *Fiery Cross* had survived the night. I had still to die!

Suddenly I was aware that two figures had entered the chartroom—undoubtedly Granger and his mate. What were they saying to each other? I could not distinguish even a gesture. They vanished again, unheard. To my horror the deck on which I crouched unhurriedly assumed a perpendicular; lying on my back, my legs in the air, I expected the end. A twist of the ship brought my temple against the thrumming plank. At that instant some power struck a terrific blow and I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes it was quite light. Through an open door a stiff breeze was blowing.

A man was balancing himself in front of me, a bottle in his hand. There was the reek of ardent spirits in my nostrils. I choked.

"That's better!" said a husky voice. I recognized Granger.

"Then we are still alive?" I remarked.

"We are," he returned, and I suddenly discerned his caver-

nous eyes, deep in the sockets. They burned like pin-wheels, I thought, revolving swiftly and with a slight eccentricity. My own eyes began to spin



too, and in the midst of a tremendous flashing of fires I retreated into a tangible darkness. . . . I knew that it was death.

That was my conviction, not shaken until a woman in nurse's cap rattled a spoon against my teeth and I came violently awake in a motionless room. I was very angry. "This is an outrage," I thought.

The nurse (I knew what she was, on the moment) gazed benignantly upon me, still holding the odious spoon between extraordinarily slim fingers with highly polished nails.

"Go away!" I shouted at her. And she obediently retired, without moving a limb, simply lapsing into the distance till she was a mere miniature, distinct in every feature but beyond the reach of my voice. I closed my eyes, and was whirled away into darkness.

They tell me I was a week in the hospital before I spoke intelligibly. Then it was to inquire after Farmer Granger. With some difficulty I made them understand. A man I afterward identified as a surgeon told me that he was "all right." I inwardly despised the fiction and was silent. There was but one fact: I had been saved from a wreck—by a miracle.

But the doctor told me the truth. I verified it later by putting my weakness into a taxi and being rumbled down to a wharf on the San Francisco waterfront, whence I stared upon the *Fiery Cross*, a dilapidated, spiritless body, infested with busy men who crawled about and in and out like insects—the wreckers at work. I merely can state the fact: Granger brought that derelict into port, put me in hospital and went about his business "on the tenth of April." I am utterly unable to relate a tale of heroism, of masterly expedient in the jaws of destruction, of miraculous salvage. At the very end of his career as a mariner Granger's luck held. The papers had nothing to say about him except a brief three lines: ". . . . *Fiery Cross* into port after a stormy passage of twelve days from Honolulu."

I questioned the people at the hospital, with little satisfaction. They had heard nothing of any tremendous storm; a Captain Granger had brought me

thither to recover from a concussion of the brain received by falling against a bulkhead. Having performed this duty, he had departed, leaving only an address, "in case of necessity." I had got well; there was no "necessity;" I might seek him out at my leisure.

TO say that I was bitterly offended is a mild expression. I was outraged by such coldness. I determined to ignore the existence of so heartless a friend. I got up and went about my business and presently lost the paper with the address on it. It was two months later that I received a postcard with the cryptic *T 5 North R 8 West S B M.*, and signed *G. Granger*, sent to my newspaper desk.

The moment I received this message I forgave the man everything, and sought a skilled interpreter of hieroglyphs, who quickly informed me that this was the fashion in which homesteaders described their quarter-sections and sections. "The initials stand for San Bernardino Meridian," he said. "It is the latitude of reference."

A map soon gave me the requisite details, and I wrote Granger a note, asking him for news of himself. Within the week I was answered, and invited to visit him "on my ranch."

To myself I made the excuse that I must know what happened on the *Fiery Cross*, and traveled south, sending a telegram ahead of me. When I got off the train I saw Farmer Granger on the platform, gravely scanning the passengers. He greeted me cordially and said: "I thought I would take you out in my automobile. My place is twenty miles from the railway station, you know."

There was no use in protesting at the distance: I had come clear from San Francisco to see him, and it was too late to turn back. He led me to a small car and put me into it. When he had cranked it, he paused and pointed with one gloved hand toward the mountains in the north.

"We'll go over Cajon Pass," he said.

For two hours we steadily climbed a winding road among the mountains till behind us and below us lay a laby-

rinth of valleys, cañons and rugged defiles; ahead of us rose the treeless rim of the summit, sharp-cut, against the pellucid sky.

"What is beyond?" I demanded.

He glanced at me, with a livelier sparkle in his eyes than I had ever seen. "I am building a home over there," he said.

The road grew steeper and more precarious. The little car labored heavily, as if breathless in that altitude, until a last pitch brought us to a standstill on the height. Granger stretched out his arm. "Over there," he said simply.

I gazed across the valley, lying flatly below us, without a tree, unwatered—the desert. My eyes discerned not a house,

not a green field. At great intervals I detected miniature derrick-like structures.

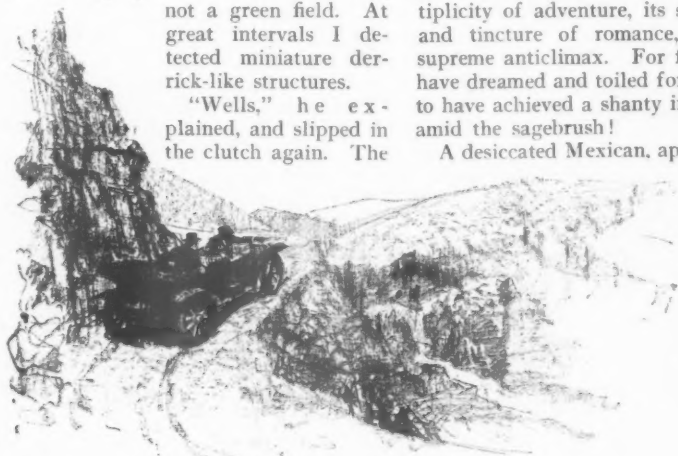
"Wells," he explained, and slipped in the clutch again. The

"Ah!" he breathed. "Wait!"

I was half dozing when he roused me at last. "Here we are!" he said, and turned the car from the road straight into the unbroken desert. It choked along for a hundred yards and then entered a stretch of vacant sand. "My first clearing," he explained. I looked up and saw a small house beside a huge derrick. "My home," he said.

I NEED not enlarge on the facts: the wretched house built of cracked lumber, the arid desert about it, the dismal well, the stunted vegetables wilting in the sun. It was a travesty of all that the word *home* conveys. When I remembered this seafarer's career, its multiplicity of adventure, its spice of peril and tincture of romance, this was a supreme anticlimax. For forty years to have dreamed and toiled for a home, and to have achieved a shanty in the Mojave amid the sagebrush!

A desiccated Mexican, appearing from



Granger stretched out his arm. "Over there," he said simply.

mountain-crest rose behind us as we rolled down the long slope; the mesquite and the yucca swarmed up toward us, crowded close to the road, received us in their scattered multitude till we seemed to be going along in an interminable and arid grove of stunted trees, like giants in a Lilliputian world.

Several times I inquired, "How far is it?" with the constant response, "Wait."

My eyes ached with the glare. We were in a country without landmarks, directionless except for the dim wheel-tracks in the sand. As if he read my thoughts, Granger uttered the remark: "I laid my course by compass at first."

"I'd think it was needful," I assented.

a mysterious place of concealment, set before us a substantial meal. Over it Granger grew jovial and familiar. "I never expected to be quite so comfortable," he told me. "The climate is unsurpassed. I sleep like a top the whole night through—a privilege indeed. I eat heartily, as you see. And in time I shall have this place blooming like Eden—a paradise." He went on to explain that water was all that was needed. "My well pumps thirty inches, and will develop more."

"Then you have quit the sea for good?" I demanded.

"Forever," he said solemnly. He gazed out into the desert with his clear, grave eyes alight. "That was why I

had to be in California by the tenth of April. I homesteaded this three years ago. The law only allows a settler five months in the year away from his claim. My five months were up on the tenth. I should have lost my rights if I had been late."

"But it's so—so far away," I said haltingly.

"In a way," he confessed. "But I have been over the world looking for a place to make a home many years. I was trained to be a seaman, so I worked at it. But I am really a farmer by nature and gifts, if I may use the word." He looked at me apologetically. "You see I have a pride that way. I call it 'my gift.' I have developed it. I have even altered a Latin quotation (I studied the tongue when I was in school): *nihil humi alienum mihi*—nothing pertaining to the soil is strange to me. I am following a plan. I shall have a beautiful home here in five years. I am planting poplars on the east side of my one-hundred-and-sixty-acre homestead and cottonwoods on my desert claim. I wish you to see my garden, when it is cooler."

So he went on, treating me with a dignified frankness, allowing me an occasional interjection of assent or admiration or wonder. Gradually I was subdued by the magic of his tremendous penchant. The vast and waterless desert became vivid and flowering. I saw his trees grow up, his fields spread into green lakes, his arbors arch above cool caverns. I was astonished at my own sympathy with him. He ceased to be ridiculous.

"I wanted you to view this with your own eyes," he murmured at last. "You are a friend. . . . a valued friend. . . . you understand. . . ."

"Then this is what you have always worked for," I assented.

"Exactly."

"Some day you will want to go to sea again," I suggested.

He shook his head with an original vehemence.

"But—wont you miss the excitement? the change of scene? the sense of adventure?"

"Adventure?" he repeated. "*This* is

adventure. I shall plant things and see them grow. I shall make a home, all my own." He turned his earnest eyes upon me. "You know all my life I have sailed other men's ships—a mere task. This is real—I must show you my plans."

In the bare shanty he spread out much-thumbed blue-prints, lined off in the monotonous squares of the land-surveyor. He pointed out his own location, marked with a neat cross in red ink. He recited the names of trees, of grains, of vegetables, which he should grow in abundance.

"And when it is all done, complete—what then?"

He bent his elderly head, grayed by the suns and storms of the world's seas, over the blue-print. His brown finger trembled slightly, resting on the red cross. "In time I hope—not to be alone," he said simply. "One always has something ahead, to work for. I never married, for the reason that it would have been a poor business when I was at sea. But now that I am settled, with a home, I look forward."

It was perfectly evident that he had no woman in mind as the wife-to-be. He was utterly simple about it. . . . "something to look forward to."

The sun set and the stars came out, shining brilliantly through the crystal air. We stood in the coolness of the vast out-of-doors a moment before going to bed.

"Eight o'clock," he murmured. "San Bernardino Meridian time."

"I see you are settled for life," I remarked. "But I'm still in the dark as to how you ever got the *Fiery Cross* inside the Golden Gate."

"The truth is, I had made up my mind to be home by the tenth," he answered with simplicity.

WHEN my eye falls on a map of California, and I see the black line of the San Bernardino Meridian stretching across mountain and desert, the unchanging point of reference of Captain Granger, now truly a farmer, it strikes me that his answer was most complete, serenely spoken in the unadorned language of the Immortals.



Daphne Kip,
the heroine.

The Previous Chapters of "The Thirteenth Commandment"

Daphne Kip, the heroine, is a Cleveland girl whose father puts a second mortgage on a piece of property to furnish money for her trousseau. Clay Wimburn, her fiancé, is a young New Yorker with bright prospects who goes into debt to buy her engagement ring.

While doing her shopping in New York, Daphne is expensively entertained by Wimburn. And it is not till the delighted girl suggests they pick out an apartment like the one rented by her brother, Bayard Kip, overlooking Central Park, that she gets the first peep at the modern enemy of love. She finds that they are not going to be able to afford twenty-five hundred a year for lodging.

One night, as an especial treat, Wimburn takes Daphne for supper to Claremont. It is two days to his payday and he figures he can just make it. By mistake he tips the waiter five dollars for a seat for Daphne. When the check comes, he is staggered. The melon he ordered has cost twice as much as he expected. He cannot tip the waiter and there is an embarrassing scene. He is without even carfare and they have to walk four miles home.

In his misery Wimburn lets Daphne see that his bank account is also wiped out. She is heartsick as she sees stretching before her the same penny-fighting existence she has so hated at home.

At the apartment, Bayard Kip, who has been in Europe on his honeymoon with his beautiful bride Leila, opens the door. "Money gave out, so we had to come home," he laughs. "What's the good word?"

"Lend me five dollars," answers Wimburn.

LEILA KIP is a spendthrift. Kip won her away from Tom Duane, a wealthy New York clubman. She soon has Kip

"**T**HOU shalt not spend a l l that thou earnest," is the theme of this new novel, "The Thirteenth Commandment," by R u p e r t Hughes. It is the intimate story of the lives of Americans in the years of 1914 and 1915, and shows the modern epidemic of spending that is breaking men, spoiling romance, and sending more women to seek independence.

worried over her extravagance. One day she has expensive gowns for Daphne and herself charged to her husband. He is enraged. Daphne returns her gown and determines never again to accept anything from any man. She breaks her engagement and decides to go to work. Leila keeps her gown and gets a bank account and a diamond necklace from Kip as tokens of repentance for his scolding.

Daphne's first hard lesson in the life of independence comes when she asks Duane to help her get a position on the stage. Duane makes love to her but is repulsed. He obtains for her a position as an understudy to a popular actress. She gets the opportunity to play the star's part one night, fails, and is consoled by Duane, not Wimburn, who has hated her stage work.

Duane now entertains her at Claremont. His supper is a tantalizing display of power and luxury. Daphne feels the lure of it. However, he again presumes to be loverlike and Daphne decides to see no more of him. She and Wimburn are reconciled and resume their courtship with ardor. At last the peril of the closeness of their relationship alarms them and they decide to marry at once. But the war has begun. Times are bad. Wimburn's salary is cut in half and Daphne looks again for work.

The war is hitting everyone. Bayard Kip loses everything. Wimburn's job at half salary vanishes. And old Wesley Kip, Daphne's father, comes to beg his son for money to save the old home. With father, brother and lover all incapable of helping her, Daphne takes a position at eight dollars a week, addressing letters to pay for her little room with a Mrs. Chivvis, with whom she has gone to live. But she has to lose even that position because the foreman insults her and she hurls a bottle of ink into his enraged face before she escapes from him.

Now she is in despair when Duane again entreats her to let him give her some of the pleasures of life. She goes for a ride and to dinner with him. On the way home he proposes that she live with him without marriage. She is indignant. But the next day she is about to accept, when the proofs of a portrait of her father arrive. She looks into the wrinkled, kindly face and rejoices that it came in time to make her desire nothing so much as to remain "Old Wes Kip's girl."



Clay
Wimburn.

The THIRTEENTH



Bayard Kip, the
brother of the
heroine.

Rupert Hughes' most brilliant novel: the story of
a girl's adventures with life as it is
being lived right now.

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "What Will People Say?" "Empty
Pockets" and "Clipped Wings."

CHAPTER LI

MISERY may love company yet take
precious little joy from the neigh-
borhood; for two poverties do not
make a luxury; no, nor a hundred.
Zero multiplied by infinity, indeed, remains a
little, more zero if possible than before.

In the winter of 1914-15, all the evil spirits
seemed to be combining infinitely to pound all
the good forces back into nothingness. Nations
of the highest ideals were rendered maniac
with onsets of fury which they themselves
abhorred but could not resist. Surely never
before in its history had the entire planet
worn so woe-begone a countenance.

In the gigantic total of humanity's prob-
lems, those of Daphne Kip were ephemerally
tiny; but they were important to her and
therefore to her history. She was fighting out
a little European war of souls within her own
microcosm.

All her souls had arrayed themselves and
joined in *mêlée*. The needs of happiness and
of money and of security, the longing for
adventure and experiment, fought for Duane,
and tried to carry her over to the alliance with
him. Her love for her pauperish lover Clay,
her sense of honor, and the instinct for law
and custom and respectability, and her instinct
of suspicion for pleasure without toil, fought
against Duane.

Then her father's photographs appeared and
made her realize that more people were in-
volved than just herself and her two lovers.
For after all, every triangle is really a poly-
gon, or, rather, a polyhedron of numberless
facets.

Wesley Kip's smile ended the battle in his

COMMANDMENT

Rupert Hughes is essentially a novelist of *to-day*. He writes not of the past, but of the very vivid present.

Illustrated by
James Montgomery
Flagg

daughter's heart, and put to rout the anti-social forces of Duane. She ranged the proofs of his photographs along the top of her bureau and stood off admiring them and deciding which to select for finishing.

Suddenly she remembered Wetherell and his messages to Leila. She felt so renewedly virtuous herself that it seemed her duty to go down and rebuke Leila for her apparent philandering at Newport. She also was curious to see how guiltily Leila would receive the news.

But she found Bayard at home for luncheon and she was neither mad nor mean enough to confuse Leila before him. And this was rather for his sake than Leila's.

Leila was just informing Bayard that the butcher had delivered the morning's order just as far as the freight elevator, and had instructed his boy to send the meat up only after the money came down.

Bayard had no money, and the chagrin of his situation was bitter. He snarled at Leila:

"Tell the cub to take the meat back and eat it himself. Then I'll go over and butcher the butcher."

Leila dismissed the boy with a faint-hearted show of indig-



Leila Kip,
the extravag-
ant wife
of Bayard.

nation. Then she came back and said: "And now we have no meat to eat."

Bayard was driven back on philosophy, the last resort of the desperate.

"Well, the vegetarians say we ought never to eat meat, anyway. And the Lord knows we're feeding as well as the European monarchs. The morning paper says that the Kaiser is trying to show his people how little food he can get along with, and King George of England is dispensing with most of the ceremony in his dining-room. I suppose Queen Mary waits on the table and washes her own dishes. I suppose she has to shine her own crown.

"We're poor, but, my Lord, we're in grand company. Look at this cartoon of Cesare's in the *Sun*: Father Knickerbocker turning his pockets inside out and not a penny in them. New York City has to borrow money on short-time notes at high interest to pay its own current bills.

"Next summer there'll be no free baths, no concerts, no improvements, no anything. Uncle Sam is poorer still, because he owes more. That's because the whole town, the whole country, the whole world, is run on the same fool principles that I've been running my life on since I got married."

"Oh, it's all my fault," Leila broke in. "The whole war is my fault, I suppose."

"Nothing is your fault, honey," said Bayard benignantly. "It's mine and the whole world's. We're all living beyond our income, spending to-day what we expect to get to-morrow, spending to-morrow what we expect to get next week. We gamble on our luck and our health; and the smallest mishap spills the beans all over the place.

"Look at Europe. All the countries over there were stumbling along under such debt that they wondered how they could meet the interest on the next payday. And now they are mortgaging their great-grandsons' property to pay for shooting their sons.

"It's the old Thirteenth Commandment that we've all been smashing to flinders. And, my God, what a punishment we're all getting! And it's only beginning."

Leila had no interest in generalities. When they grew more than so big, she could not see them at all. She ended Bayard's oration with a familiar untruth.

"It's always darkest before the dawn. Let's eat what we've got."

THEY sat down to a pitiful meal, meatless, maidless, mirthless—hardly more than the raw turnips and cold water of *Colonel Sellers*. Leila fetched what victual there was.

"Mayn't I help?" Daphne urged. But Leila shook her head.

"I'll let you wash the dishes, though, for my hands are ruined. Just look at them!"

She held them out, and the white slendernesses were chafed and red. She had not wept over the European agonies, but tears of pity for her pretty hands came out on the sills of her eyes and she turned away. Poverty is never more hateful than when it gnaws at beauty. Leila broke down, whimpering a sort of doleful Irish bull.

"I can't stand everything. No servant, no money, no theaters, no friends, no food, no fun."

Bayard cowered under the childish pathos of this. He answered somberly:

"They're not having much fun in Belgium either, or in the trenches in France or Germany, or anywhere. The poor in New York and all over the world are worse off than we are."

Leila did not want sententiousness. She flared up.

"That doesn't cheer me any—to tell me about other peoples' miseries. It doesn't feed me to know that other people are hungry. I don't get any warmer from thinking of those poor soldiers out in the ice-water. I think of them all the time, till I'm going crazy. I want to forget them for a while. I want to laugh once more before I forget how."

"I could use a smile or two myself," said Bayard. "I guess I'll go down to the club. Maybe somebody will stake me to a funny story."

"I haven't got any club!"

"Bring us home a funny story, anyway," Daphne called out.

"The kind he gets there," said Leila, "he'd better leave there."

Bayard shrugged into his overcoat and left without kissing either his wife or sister good-by.

Leila went to the hall door to call him back.

"What about some theater tickets for to-night or for a matinée this afternoon?"

"Theater tickets?" Bayard gasped. "When I can't buy a meal-ticket!"

"Well, I can do without bread, but

I've got to have a little cake now and then, and if you don't take me somewhere, I'll go with somebody else."

"Oh, it's like that, is it?" Bayard growled. And now he said what he had merely thought at his first breakfast after they came back from their honeymoon. "I didn't know that I was supposed to be booking myself as a continuous vaudeville entertainer when I married you. Suppose you entertain me a little, with something besides complaints for once."

Leila thought of the many raptures she had entertained him with, including the jewels she had given him to pawn, and she was about to speak. But she was wise enough to know that they would rankle deeper left undisturbed. So she gulped hard and said nothing, and Bayard flung away.

Daphne and Leila went out to the kitchen, set the dishes in the pan and the pan under the faucet. Leila turned on the hot water. Daphne pushed her away. She did not resist, but took up a towel and began to dry the plates.

Daphne was glad to be at work.

"There's one good thing about a small

meal," she chirped: "it makes less dishes to wash."

Then, with as much trepidation as if she had been the accused instead of the accuser, she faltered:

"Oh, say, Leila, do you remember a man named Wetherell?"

Leila dropped a plate. She said that it was hot. But other plates had been hot.

"Wetherell? Wetherell?" she pondered aloud, with an unconvincing uncertainty. "I believe I do remember meeting somebody of that name. English, wasn't he?"

"Very."

"Oh, yes. He was at Newport, I think. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I met him last night and he thought I was you."

"How could he?" Leila gasped. "We don't look the least alike."

"I was in the dark."

"In the dark! Good heavens! Where?"

Already Leila had won the weather-gauge. Daphne had to confess her outing with Duane, the crash of the collision, and the return to Yonkers in Wetherell's car. Leila took advantage of the situa-

NEVER in history has a fever of speculation swept a country as it is sweeping the United States these days. The epidemic has its source and its strongest hold in New York. It has turned the biggest and greatest city in the world into a frenzied community resembling nothing so much as an overcrowded mining camp in a day of gold strikes. All this you see in this installment of "The Thirteenth Commandment," through the eyes of the country's foremost novelist. It is the background for the most unusual love story ever written by an American. ❧ ❧

tion to interpolate:

"Good heavens! How could you! You of all people! And with Tom Duane! What would Clay think of it!"

Daphne had next to confess that she already knew what Clay thought of it. She told how he had met them on their return and tried to attack Duane, and what rage he had visited on herself.

She had not meant to tell all this; and now that it was out, she knew that she had no right to reproach Leila for having known Wetherell in Newport. She had no right even to suspect that Leila



With as much trepidation as if she had been the accused instead of the accuser, Daphne faltered: "Oh, my, Leila, do you remember a man named Wetherell?" Leila dropped a plate. She said that it was hot. But other plates had been hot.

had overstepped any of the bounds of propriety. She herself had been wrongly accused by Clay on account of far more compromising circumstances than she could allege against Leila. She knew how innocent she had been. And still she was not convinced of Leila's innocence. She was merely silenced.

LEILA'S interest in Wetherell seemed to revive on recollection and she contrasted the vivacity of her weeks at Newport in Wetherell's company with the gloom of her life at home.

Daphne listened to Leila's wails as long as she could endure them. Then she went back to her own room.

The westering sun was pouring in at her window and it rejoiced her. Then she fell back with a cry of despair. The proofs of her father's photographs, which she had left on her bureau, had been preyed upon by the light. They had curled and darkened. The face that had looked at her and smiled with devoted trustfulness was nothing but a red-brown blur.

She felt a superstitious dread, a foreboding. She needed her father's smile. After all, she was only a young girl, alone in a big city, overwhelmed with hard and cruel times.

She resolved that she would order the photographs finished in permanent form. But that meant the paying of the photographer's bill, and the sum was beyond her reach.

Her heart turned in its loneliness toward Clay. She blamed herself now for furnishing his jealousy with an excuse. She felt sorry for him and visioned his forlorn moods. His very wrath was a proof of his love; and its violence, of its fervor.

She went so far as to telephone his boarding-house. She learned that he had moved away, and a stupid foreign maid could not repeat his new address intelligibly. Daphne was about to call up his college club. Then she remembered his telling her that he was an exile from clubland too—posted for non-payment of the dues and his house account.

She was in a distress of fear that Clay had been turned out of doors penniless; so great were her distress and her re-

morse, indeed, that when Duane called up and asked if he might take her riding, she refused with a curtness that startled herself and frightened him from the telephone.

Immediately she regretted her discourtesy, for she remembered that Duane had hinted at his willingness to help Clay. He was capable even of that generosity! She wondered if Clay were capable of accepting it. The niceties of jealousy struck her as rather imbecile in the face of poverty. Feelings of delicacy were well named; they belonged only to people who could afford delicacies.

To bribe Duane's charity might be her duty for the sake of others; but if those others would not accept the fruits of her sacrifice, what then? And just how much would Duane charge her for his charity?

CHAPTER LII

THE next day her fears of Weatherell and of Leila were rekindled. She went down to ask Bayard to help her trace Clay. Bayard was out and Leila was on the point of leaving. She was dressed in her killingest frock and hat and generally mobilized for conquest.

"Aren't we grand!" Daphne cried. "You look like a million dollars. Where you off to?"

"Going for a little spin."

"Who with?"

Leila hesitated a moment, and then answered with a note of challenging defiance:

"With Mr. Wetherell. Any objection?"

Daphne accepted the challenge. "I haven't, but Bayard might have. Have you told him?"

"Did you tell Clay you were going with Tom Duane?"

"No, but I wish I had told him or hadn't gone. And anyhow you're married to Bayard."

"You are—or were—engaged to Clay." Leila was growing a trifle vicious in her thrusts—and what was even more embarrassing, polite. "Not that I blame you for going. You'd be a fool not to. Clay is about as much use as Bayard



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAEG

Clay dropped to a divan and made Daphne sit alongside. Bayard beckoned Leila to her old throne on his knees. Clay poverty. They all laughed till their eyes were wet at the abrupt redemption from the hell of from Elba; hostile armies were flinging themselves at his feet; generals



held forth like one returned from Golconda. He grew lyrical, Pindaric, with his celebration of the Olympian victory over want. Clay, the weakling, the improvident, the mournful, the skulker, was Napoleon returned embracing his knees asking him to lead them, provision, accouter them.

when it comes to remembering that a girl has a right to a little amusement now and then."

This was a kind of argument by *jiu-jitsu*. Daphne was floored by Leila's agreement. Leila said, as if to reassure her:

"I hope you don't suspect me of any wicked intentions. Mr. Wetherell has never forgotten that I'm married, and neither have I. And I shall be chaperoned. He is taking another woman along."

"I wonder if it's that Mrs. Bettany?" Daphne said.

Leila was on the alert:

"What Mrs. Bettany? Not Mrs. T. J. B.? What under the sun do you know about her?"

"She was with Mr. Wetherell the other night."

"She was? Oh, Lord, then he's lost. If that harpy gets her claws on him, he's gone."

"What do you care?"

"I haven't so many cavaliers that I can afford to lose one. And Mrs. T. J. B.'s reputation isn't such that it will help me any to be seen with her."

"Hadn't you better stay at home then?" Daphne suggested eagerly.

"Home? Do you mean this hole when you say *home*? Not if Mrs. T. J. B. were the devil's first divorced wife would I miss this day. Good-by!"

She opened the door—then closed it again to say:

"Still, you needn't mention my little picnic to Bayard. It's all I can do to live with him now. I'll be back before he is. Promise?"

Daphne promised under duress and Leila went. Daphne disapproved and felt afraid; but when Bayard came in unexpectedly early and asked for Leila, Daphne lied inevitably and said she did not know where she was.

Finally Leila came back, her hair a little windblown, her cheeks abloom with new roses, her eyes sparkling dangerously bright.

"Where've you been all this while?" said Bayard.

"Window wishing," said Leila. Daphne loathed the duplicity, but held her whist.

STILL, Bayard was her brother, her own blood and kin, and after several days of Leila's excursions, increasingly prolonged, Daphne felt that her complicated duty required her to tell Bayard the truth. One afternoon she achieved that most odious and dubious duty of loyalty, telling on one member of a couple to the other.

She tried to be casual about it, but Bayard caught fire at once. He was already in a state of tindery irritability, and Daphne's efforts to reassure him as to Leila's innocence of any guile only angered him the more.

He kept leaning out of the window and staring down into the street. Finally, espying Leila in Wetherell's car, when it approached the apartment house, he dashed to the elevator and met the two at the curb as Clay had met Duane and Daphne. Curbstones are famous battling places, little Rubicons. People who step out of carriages or into them step into so many situations.

BAYARD was quite as furious as Clay had been, but held himself in better control. When Leila got out she was startled to see him standing at her elbow. There was nothing for her to do but make the introductions.

"Oh, it's you, dear!" she fluttered. "I want you to meet Mr. Wetherell. Mr. Wetherell, my husband."

"Ah, really!" Wetherell exclaimed, trying to conceal his uneasiness. "This is a bit of luck! I've heard so much about you! Your wife does nothing but sing your praises."

"Wont you come up?" said Bayard ominously.

"Er, thanks—no, not to-day. I'm a trifle late to an—er—appointment," said Wetherell.

"Then I'll have a word with you here," said Bayard. "Run along, Leila; I'll join you in a minute; I want to discuss something with Mr. Wetherell."

He said it pleasantly, but Leila was terrified. The spectacle of rival bucks locking horns in their dispute is not altogether enjoyable to civilized does. Leila went into the vestibule and watched through the glass door, expecting a combat. She saw a colloquy in

dumb show, but there was nothing alarming in the actions. She could not hear Bayard saying:

"Mr. Wetherell, I'd thank you to pay your attentions elsewhere."

"What's that?" Wetherell gasped at the abrupt attack.

"Your attentions to Mrs. Kip are very distasteful to me."

"My jah fellow, I hope you don't imagine for one moment that—why, your wife is the finest little gel in the wahld."

"That's for me to say, not you!"

"My wad! this is amazin'."

"It is indeed. It will be more than that if you come around again."

"Oh, I say, I can't have this, you know."

"Oh yes, you can, and you'll have worse if you're not careful."

"By Jove, I— Look hyah, what's the meaning of such astonishin' behavior?"

"You're an Englishman, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Had you heard that your country was at war?"

"I had."

"Well, a big strapping fellow like you ought to be over there fighting for his country, instead of looking for trouble here."

WETHERELL'S panic at the domestic situation was forgotten in the attack on his patriotism. He drew himself up with an unconsciously military automatism and said:

"I fancy I'm doin' my country as much service hyah as I could be over there."

"More, perhaps," Bayard sneered, with contemptuous irony, "but that's your business, not mine. Mrs. Kip is my business, and I don't intend to have her subjected to your—your attentions. I'm trying to be neutral, but by—well, I've warned you. You understand me. Good day!"

He was quivering with battle fervor and he could hardly remember that he was on the public sidewalk. He turned away and left Wetherell muttering: "Of all the blighters I ever—"

Bayard joined Leila in the vestibule and they went up in the elevator to-

gether. She waited till they were in their own apartment before she demanded an account of the conversation.

He told her in a rage and she flew into another. She divided her wrath between Bayard and Daphne. There was enough for both. Daphne tried to escape, but being cornered proceeded to fight back, whereupon Leila denounced her to Bayard and told of her ride with Duane. In Leila's version Daphne had little reputation left; she did not blame Daphne for seeking a little escape from the monotony of her poverty; she blamed her only for being a cat and a scandal-bearer, one who was more careful about minding other people's reputations than protecting her own.

It was a right good fight and getting well beyond the bounds of politeness, when the telephone announced that Clay Wimburn was calling.

Nobody imaginable would have been welcome in that battlefield, but Clay seemed peculiarly ill timed. The only thing those three agreed on was that they could not see him then. Bayard went to the telephone and called down:

"Did you tell Mr. Wimburn we were in?"

"Er, no sir; I told him I'd see was you."

"Then tell him we're out."

"Yes sir."

Bayard had an uncanny feeling that Clay was hearing all this, and in a moment the hallman called up again to say:

"Mr. Wimburn says he's naturally got to see you."

"We're out, I told you."

Evidently the telephone was taken from the hallman's hand, for Clay's voice roared in Bayard's ear.

"I hear you, you old villain. I know you're in, and I'm coming up. It's a matter of life and death. I'm on my way up now."

Bayard turned to the two women with the news. Daphne gasped, "Great Heavens! What disaster is it now?" and thought of everything horrible at once, her favorite terror being a womanly intuition that Clay had killed Duane and fled to Bayard's apartments for refuge from the law.

CHAPTER LIII

IT seemed decenter that Leila and Daphne should disappear, since Bayard had said that they were all out. The women retreated to Leila's room as a good coign of audition.

When Bayard opened the door Clay swept in like an April gale. He flung himself at Bayard and clenched his elbows in his hands and roared:

"Bayard! Bayard! It's come! We're rich! We're made! Eureka! Unedea! Munitions! Wow!"

Bayard stared at him and sighed patiently:

"What have you been taking? Laughing gas?"

"I've been taking contracts."

"Contracts? There aint no such animal!"

"Oh yes, there is. And I've nailed one, a hippopotamus! A regular giasticutus!"

"If you will go to the bathroom and hold your head under the cold faucet you'll get great relief and so will I."

"I'll give you relief. Listen! The other night while I was trailing a job in darkest New Jersey, I ran across a little clue, and a little man who told me a little secret. The Germans have been getting ready for this war for years, piling up guns and ammunition for *Der Tag*. The other countries were caught only half ready. They have stopped the Germans on the Marne, but they've been using their shells at such a rate that the famine is near. Their only hope is to buy supplies of us. They're going to dump enough contracts on this country to furnish about a million dollars to every citizen. They're afraid of exciting attention and stirring up opposition from the peace-at-any-price party and the hyphenated Americans, so their agents

are pussy-footing round to distribute contracts quietly.

"The Bethlehem Steel Company has gathered in a big lot of them and I had a tip that the stock was going to boom; so are a lot of other stocks. I'd sell my right arm for a little cash. But there's no market for detached right arms, so I used mine to sign up a few little contracts for placing contracts and I've plucked them and brought them to you."

He broke into song: "Zillah, darling one, I plucked them and brang them to thou!"

He broke into dance and whirled Bayard off his feet. Bayard tried to be patient:

"That is all very interesting, Clay, but what can you or I do with ammunition contracts?"

"Accept 'em! Open up your old shut-up factory and get busy."

"We have no machinery for making ammunition."

"Get it, then, or adapt your machinery! There are a thousand things to do—gun parts to make, breech-blocks,

shell-cases, cartridges, triggers, magazine-clips, aeroplane engines, motors, motor-boats, spades, knives, bayonets, shrapnel—thousands of things. And they need millions of each article, for there are millions of men in the field using up what they've got so fast that it's only a matter of weeks before they'll be desperate."

Bayard began to see the scheme—also the obstacles:

"But it takes money to make these things. Where will we get the cash for the pay-rolls and the raw materials?"

"From the banks! The banks are bursting open with idle money; it's rotting on their hands!"

"What security can we give?"

"The contracts—contracts with the

The Three Added Commandments

MANY readers have written to ask that Mr. Hughes enumerate the three added commandments.

"The Eleventh Christ added, didn't he?" said Mr. Hughes. "It is: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

"The twelfth is usually referred to as: 'Don't get found out.'"

"The Thirteenth is: 'Thou shalt not spend all that thou earnest.'"

governments of England and France and Russia back of them. Every market in the country is going to feel the demand—horses are being bought up by the herd, and shoes by the million pair, and grain by the shipload—everything!"

BAYARD went aglow now with the realization of the opportunity. Daphne and Leila came rushing from concealment. Clay's beatitude was so complete that he forgot his resentments and kissed them both.

Finding Daphne in his arms again, and her lips like ambrosia on his, he groaned:

"I'm sorry I was such a dog, the other night, darling. But I had just found the first gleam of hope and I was crazy to tell you, and I waited outside till I was almost dead. Then you came at last with Duane, and I forgot everything but my ugly temper. Forgive me."

"No, forgive me. I oughtn't to have gone with him, but I—well, he offered to help you, and—"

She was looking for some excuse that should not mar his bliss. Clay flung his head high and answered:

"I don't need his help! I'll be able to buy and sell Duane's by the dozen before long."

Daphne laughed with ecstasy at his conceit. It had been so long since she had seen him reveal any emotion but craven humility or sick rage at ill luck. Bumptiousness was very becoming to him.

He dropped to a divan and made her sit alongside. Bayard beckoned Leila to her old throne on his knees.

Clay held forth like one returned from Golconda. He grew lyrical, Pindaric with his celebration of the Olympian victory over poverty. They all laughed till their eyes were wet at the abrupt redemption from the hell of want.

Clay, the weakling, the improvident, the mournful, the skulker, was Napoleon returned from Elba; hostile armies were flinging themselves at his feet; generals embracing his knees asking him to lead them, provision, accouter them.

He had thought out everything. He knew the factory and its machinery, and

he had sought expert advice on its adaptation to the needs of the occasion. He had not forgotten a legitimate selfishness. He had arranged commissions for himself in every direction. He had arranged for partial payments in advance. He had arranged that the final payments should be made when the wares were delivered at the American docks so that the risks of transfer across the submarine-infested ocean should not fall on the manufacturers. He had even made the stipulation that the moneys should be paid in American dollars, since he foresaw the panics in exchange rates that afterward threw the markets into temporary convulsions.

Daphne made a profound comment: "Opportunity knocks at every man's door, they say, and Clay didn't keep her waiting, did you, honey?"

Clay answered with excusable modesty.

"Knocked at my door, eh? She never came near my part of town. I went out and found her running down a side street, and I lassoed her and dragged her in. I've got her locked in my cellar and I've trained her to eat out of my hand."

"You're simply wonderful!" Daphne cried, and hugged him till he ouchd.

Bayard was frantic to be at work. He resolved to telephone the president of his company at once and lay the matter before him. Leila cannily advised him to grasp the whip-hand of the situation and keep it. He agreed that she was right, and promised her a commission on his commission.

She began to dance about the room like a Miriam celebrating the passage of the Red Sea.

"The first thing we'll do," she said, "will be to get my jewelry out of the pawnshop, and the second will be to buy some more. And oh, the dresses, and the hats!"

This sobered Bayard.

"No," he announced: "we've gone through Hades once because I gambled away my reserves. This time I'm going to get a big reserve before I spend a cent. I'll never risk another ordeal like the one we've been through. I've learned my lesson. No more fractures of the Thirteenth for me!"



Wesley Kip was dazed enough with what his son had been telling him. He was tremulous with the change in the air, down a bannered street and tossing largess on either hand. Daphne was invited to breakfast and she for a French couple to buttle and cook. Bayard was impatient to get to business.



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Bayard was no longer a desperate beggar of alms from a helpless father. He was a young prince in golden armor riding made a picnic of it. Leila waited on the table. She had not got in a new maid. She was looking His office was waiting for him and he wanted to set his father to work.

Leila only laughed.

Bayard went to the telephone to start the wheels of the factory in motion by summoning the president to council. He paused to ask:

"Who shall I say is the foreign agent you are dealing with? or are there several?"

"All my contracts come through a queer sort of Englishman. He's out for Number One, and he insisted on his little private rake-off, but it's worth it, if we get the contracts."

"What's his name?" Bayard urged.

"You've got to keep it dark. He doesn't want it to be known. The foreign spies are watching him now. That's why he has me help him. That's why he pretends to be a mere butterfly."

"But I've got to know who he is," Bayard urged. "What the devil is his name?"

"Wetherell," said Clay.

CHAPTER LIV

THE great Skoda gun that suddenly dropped a monster shell into Dunkirk, twenty miles away, could hardly have caused more stupefaction than the name of Wetherell detonating in that room.

Daphne snatched her hand from Clay's. Bayard sprang up so suddenly that he almost threw Leila on her face. Instinctively, he caught her by the arm and saved her from falling. But instantly he flung her arm from him in a gush of disgust.

Clay gaped at the tableau in bewilderment. He had not dreamed that any of the three had ever heard of Wetherell. He could not imagine the bitterness the name involved.

Bayard tossed his clenched fists up in the air in a frenzy at the bad taste of Fate's latest practical joke.

"Wouldn't that be my luck!" he groaned. "Wouldn't it be my rotten luck that this one chance should come to me with that string tied to it? And with that yellow dog tied to the string? And I let him get away! I didn't beat him up! I thought I hated him, but I didn't know how much I ought to hate

him. Honestly, this is the funniest damned thing I ever heard of."

The strange sounds issuing from him were ambiguous between sobs and laughter. His face was contorted in an anguish of amusement.

"Will some kind friend please tell me what all the excitement is about?" asked Clay.

This was not so easy. Who wanted to tell Clay that Leila had just been accused of neglecting her husband and her own duties for the society of this very Wetherell? Leila herself was the one that told him. She told him bitterly, excoriating Bayard and Daphne as co-conspirators in the wreck of her reputation and Wetherell's.

She realized that they were all in grave danger of backsliding into the abyss of poverty. This was maddening, so soon after such visions of wealth. She must conquer Bayard's wrath, and to do that she must first conquer her own. She won the victory over herself with a struggle and then went to Bayard's side, pushed his elbows from his knees and re-established herself there.

He turned his face from her and she twisted it back and stared into it and made a grimace. He felt like a spoiled pouting child ashamed to be serious and ashamed to be duped into a smile.

"Look here, Bydie," Leila cooed, "don't you think you've done enough? You've shown me that you don't trust me, and you've ordered Mr. Wetherell never to come near me again. Isn't that enough without begging us all for spite? What else is it but cheap, nasty spite?"

"It's a great deal more than spite," Bayard groaned. "Do you think I'll accept favors from a man who has been courting you and got caught at it? I'd rather starve!"

"Well, I wouldn't!" Leila averred. "And I'm not going to starve. And I'm not going to let you commit hara-kiri on Wetherell's doorstep, just to spite him. And I won't let you condemn me to this poverty-life any more. If you don't accept the commission, I'll leave you. I'll go to your president myself with the scheme. He'll see a way to accept it.

Continued on page 1239 of this issue.

PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM has written forty successful novels, but it is in a short story that he is most enjoyable, as witness this blithesome tale.

And Mr. Baggs Was Only Twenty-three!

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo," etc.



MR. HARRY BAGGS came to an abrupt standstill before the closed gate, watched the train disappearing along the side of the platform and swore. The ticket collector listened to him with interest.

"I could have caught that on my head," Mr. Baggs declared vehemently.

"More than you will do on your feet, anyway," the ticket collector retorted pleasantly. "Our business is to see you foolhardy young gents don't go risking your lives in that way."

Mr. Baggs stared hard at him. The ticket collector was a large and powerful man, clad in the uniform of authority. Mr. Baggs, though dapper, was inclined to be undersized. These facts may have weighed with him as he turned slowly on his heel.

"You're too officious by half, my good fellow," he remarked. "I shall get the money for my ticket back and report you at the same time."

The official, who was having a slack

ILLUSTRATED BY
RICHARD CULTER

time, shook at the knees in well-simulated terror. Mr.

Baggs, after a somewhat heated colloquy with the clerk in the ticket-office, received back the money for his ticket and left the station. He had an evening to spare upon his hands, an immense capacity for adventure, four and nine-pence halfpenny, and three-quarters of a packet of cigarettes in his pocket. London, with all its possibilities and all its limitations, lay stretched out before him. He strolled nonchalantly out of the station, hesitated for a few moments at the corner of the street, and finally crossed the road and entered a very attractive-looking motion-picture theater.

For the first few minutes after his arrival, Mr. Baggs gave himself up to an appreciation of the performance. Then the young woman by his side dropped her program, and Mr. Baggs, after one glance into her face as he restored it, found himself fully occupied in the task of establishing sociable relations with her.

"You'll excuse my taking notice of you, miss," he whispered during a temporary interval. "Not my custom at all. Seeing you there a little lonely, though, and being that way myself, I couldn't resist it."

His neighbor smiled down at him. She was taller than Baggs and she had an air with her which puzzled him.

"Haven't you a young lady?" she inquired.

Mr. Baggs coughed. The inquiry was a little direct but he was a truthful person.

"In a sort of way," he admitted airily. "There is a young lady down at Thornton Heath, I take out sometimes. I was going down there to-night but missed my train. But there's nothing definite," he went on hastily. "A man needs to look around well, nowadays, before he settles down."

His new friend smiled delightfully.

"You must be quite young, too," she remarked.

"I am twenty-three," Mr. Baggs confessed, straightening his tie. "How old might you be?"

"I am twenty-two."

"And your name?"

"My name is Ruth."

Mr. Baggs ventured to steal a side-way glance. More than ever he was impressed with something undefinable but mysterious in his neighbor's appearance. She was probably a lady's-maid, he decided.

"In service?" he inquired diffidently. She hesitated.

"Well, I suppose so," she admitted.

Mr. Baggs promptly decided that his first surmise had been correct. Confidential lady's-maid, beyond doubt. He had come to various other decisions, too, and when at last the young woman murmured something about its being time to go, he rose promptly.

"You'll let me see you home?" he begged.

"If it isn't troubling you," she assented. "I have a sister here somewhere, though."

Mr. Baggs was a little disappointed, but he made the best of it, the more so as he discovered, when the sister was introduced, that she too possessed that

nameless air of distinction which he decided could be possessed by nothing less than a lady's-maid. Mr. Baggs, usually at no loss for light conversation and chaff, felt a little subdued as he stepped out on to the broad pavement of the Buckingham Palace Road. The jovial invitation which as a rule rose readily enough to his lips, came with almost shamefaced diffidence.

"You young ladies care about a glass of wine, eh, or something?" he inquired. "We can find a quiet little place somewhere near."

They distinctly hesitated and he felt emboldened by Ruth's tone of regret.

"I am so sorry," she explained, "but really they are so strict with us at the house where we live. If you like, you can come in and have something with us when we get home."

"Very good of you, I'm sure, if it's allowed," Mr. Baggs acquiesced.

THEY walked a very short distance and paused before one of the largest houses in a very important square. Baggs politely held open the gate of the area while the two girls glanced a little nervously around.

"You come last," Ruth whispered, "and don't make any noise."

"Don't want to get you into any trouble," Mr. Baggs remarked gallantly. "If you'd rather—"

"Come along," Ruth ordered peremptorily.

They passed through the door, which Ruth opened by merely turning the handle, along a stone passage, past a kitchen in which Mr. Baggs was much impressed by the sight of a French chef in white linen clothes, and finally into a moderate sized sitting-room, in which an elderly woman was seated, reading a newspaper. She rose at once at their entrance, which Mr. Baggs thought was very kind of her.

"My dear—"

"Please, Mrs. Green," Ruth began breathlessly, "may we have just a little supper? And this is a great friend of ours whom we haven't met for a long time. Mr. Baggs—Mrs. Green, the housekeeper here. You don't mind, do you, Mrs. Green?"

Mrs. Green looked the picture of puzzled perplexity. Ruth, however, was hanging on to her arm.

"If I am in the way, ladies," Mr. Baggs insisted, "just a word to me's enough. I have brought you home safely, and that's reward enough for any man," he added, with a little bow, and a pleasing sense of having said the right thing.

"Be a dear, Greenie," Ruth's sister begged.

"We'll get the supper ourselves, if you like," Ruth added.

"I couldn't think of such a thing," Mrs. Green protested.

"A parlor-maid has been known to set a table before now," Ruth's sister declared flippantly. "However!"

Mrs. Green hurried out. Ruth produced a gold cigarette case, at which Mr. Baggs stared with bulging eyes.

"Have one?" she offered. "Oh! you are looking at my case," she added, in momentary embarrassment. "That belongs to my young lady. She doesn't mind how many of her things I use."

Baggs accepted the cigarette and an easy-chair. Ruth took off her hat and hung it up behind the door. Her sister, whose name it transpired was Christabel, followed her example. Mr. Baggs felt their eyes regarding him a little critically. Their heads drew together.

"More than you could do to find one at all," Ruth retorted, in answer to something which sounded like a whispered criticism from her sister. "I think he's a duck."

They drew their chairs up to the fire. Presently a neatly dressed little maid came in and laid the cloth. She stared so much at this obviously unexpected visitor that she twice nearly dropped the things which she was carrying. Mr. Baggs' interest was almost painfully divided between the conversation of his two hostesses and the extraordinary liberality of the feast which was being placed upon the table.

"Seem to treat you here like one of the family," he remarked, his eyes resting upon a jar of *pâté de foie gras*.

"Oh, we have what we like," Ruth assented airily.

"Both kind of family treasures, I suppose, eh?"

"I honestly don't think they could do without us," Christabel acknowledged.

"What might your master's name be, now?"

Ruth hesitated.

"The Earl of Cullerden," her sister replied. "No one ever sees anything of him, though. He is abroad or in the country most of his time."

"Any family?"

"One or two girls," Ruth told him, throwing herself back in her chair and lazily watching the preparation of the repast. "Quite enough to keep us busy."

"The old lady much of a tartar?"

They both laughed, as he thought, unreasonably.

"You'd think so if she were to find her way down here now!" Christabel observed.

"No chance of it, I hope?" Mr. Baggs asked uneasily.

"Not the slightest," they both assured him. "She is at a dinner-party, and bridge afterwards. Wont be home till twelve."

"You have to sit up and look after her, I suppose?" Mr. Baggs cunningly suggested, sure at last of ascertaining the truth as regards the position in the household of his innamorata.

"How clever of you to guess!" Ruth exclaimed, with a grimace. "Yes, I have to put the old thing to bed. Now if you're ready, Mr. Baggs, we'll have something to eat."

THEY all sat down. Mr. Baggs tasted many dainties to which he was unaccustomed, and waited upon his two companions, whom he entertained with a constant fire of small-talk.

"I tell you what, young ladies," he remarked, glancing around the table, "I've had one or two friends in service, and been entertained a few times, but I have never been anywhere where they treated the young ladies like this. Wine, too!"

"We always insist upon it," Christabel declared, "wherever we go."

"Tell us, Mr. Baggs," Ruth asked, "if it isn't a delicate question. Most of our friends, of course, are—in service,

too, in a kind of way. What is your profession?"

Mr. Baggs coughed.

"Well," he said meditatively, "it's rather hard to give an exact name to my job. I'm a motor-engineer."

"How interesting!" Ruth murmured. "Are you in a good place now?"

Mr. Baggs leaned a little across the table. His cheeks were a little flushed, and his tie had risen above the protecting stud at the back of his collar.

"I am doing very nicely indeed," he announced impressively, "so nicely that if a young lady and I were to what you might call get on together, and both be willing, there wouldn't be any real reason why we should wait longer than, say, a couple of months at the outside, just to make a few little arrangements. Matrimony," Mr. Baggs went on, "isn't one of those things one should hurry about, but if you are lucky enough to drop across just what you're looking for—it isn't toothache, is it, miss?" he broke off.

Ruth's head had disappeared between her hands, and her shoulders were shaking. She looked up, however, a moment later. There were certainly tears in her eyes.

"Oh, Mr. Baggs, you are so funny!" she exclaimed. "I love the way you put things!"

"There's no beating about the bush with me," he admitted.

"But what about the young lady down at Thornton Heath?" Ruth murmured coyly.

"That's neither here nor there," Mr. Baggs asserted, helping himself to the remainder of the wine, after having gallantly proffered the bottle to his companions. "She may have had hopes—a good many of 'em have had—and I'm not denying that in a sort of way I've been fond of her, but as I said before, I've not committed myself, and to tell you the honest truth," Mr. Baggs went on, "I am just at the present moment feeling exceedingly glad that I haven't. And here's to what I am hoping for," he concluded, finishing off his glass of wine.

There was a discreet tap at the door. Ruth hastened there and was engaged

for a moment or two in a whispered conversation with the housekeeper. Presently she returned.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Baggs," she announced, with a little sigh, "but I think perhaps you had better go now. Mr. Henderson—that's the butler, you know—is expected in from his bridge club shortly, and he is very irritable about strangers."

Mr. Baggs rose regretfully to his feet.

"I quite understand," he said. "I'll be toddling."

He took up his hat and gloves and bamboo cane. Then he coughed. He was not, as a rule, backward in such suggestions, but Ruth's pleasantly outstretched hand was a little uncompromising. He advanced his arm gallantly toward her waist.

"You wont object? Just a—"

The young woman glided gracefully beyond his reach. She shook her head at him.

"Mr. Baggs," she sighed, "I was afraid, from the first moment I saw you, that you were a Lothario."

"A what?"

"A flirt," Ruth declared severely.

"Not at this present moment, I assure you," Mr. Baggs insisted. "There are times when a fellow feels inclined to play about a bit, and there are times," he added, summoning up his courage and approaching a little nearer, "when he is in deadly earnest. Now, if your sister would just—"

Ruth became unapproachable.

"You must wait a little, Mr. Baggs," she said softly, looking at him in a way which utterly completed his subjection. "This is only our first meeting, you know."

"The second," Mr. Baggs pronounced, "is in your hands. There's a little kind of a hop," he went on diffidently, "every Tuesday night, quite select, although perhaps not what you may be accustomed to, but if you'd favor me with your company, you and your sister," he added, with a little bow, "—there's another young fellow as I know of would be very glad of the opportunity of doing the civil by her—and you and me might have a little more conversation, Miss Ruth."



The young woman glided gracefully beyond his reach. She shook her head at him. "Mr. Baggs," she sighed, "I was afraid, from the first moment I saw you, that you were a Lothario."

"It sounds delightful," Ruth confessed.

"I shall call for you, then, to-morrow evening at eight-thirty sharp. Evening dress is optional," Mr. Baggs went on. "I wear it myself, but it is a matter of taste."

"We'll do our best," Ruth promised. "By the by, if you are a motor-engineer, haven't you a car? Couldn't you take us for a ride some time? The worst of service is that it's so confining."

Mr. Baggs tried to look delighted.

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure," he declared. "I'm rather full up, though, for the next few days. You wouldn't care for a spin quite early in the morning, would you?"

"We should love it," Ruth murmured.

"Half-past seven too early?"

"Not a second."

"Corner of the square at half-past seven to-morrow morning," Mr. Baggs arranged promptly. "We'll have a turn

round, anyway. Good night, young ladies both, and many thanks for a delightful evening—and meal," Mr. Baggs added, with a glance at the table.

"You won't forget to-morrow morning, Mr. Baggs?" Ruth asked, smiling.

"Not on your life!" was the prompt reply.

MR. BAGGS was not likely to forget the following morning.

"What the devil have you been doing to the car?" his new employer demanded, stepping back and examining it critically through his eyeglass.

"Car, my lord? Nothing at all, my lord," Baggs replied, with sinking heart.

"Where's all this mud come from, then?" Lord Robert inquired, pointing with his cane to the splashboard.

"Roads just been watered, my lord."

"Dash it all, it's only five minutes' spin from the garage! Sure you haven't been joy-riding, eh?"

"Certain, my lord. I took her out a little way through the Park to see what was wrong—one of the cylinders was missing. She's quite all right now, my lord."

Baggs' employer looked a little doubtful but said no more. He took the wheel and drove, to Baggs' secret horror, to the very house in the great square which had become for him a home of romance.

"Go and ring the bell," Lord Robert ordered, "and see if the young ladies are down."

Baggs obeyed with sinking heart. The door was opened by a stolid-looking young footman, however, and there were no signs of any women servants about.

"Your young ladies down?" Baggs inquired, in friendly fashion.

"Whom might you be inquiring for?" was the dignified reply.

"Lord Robert Matlaske," Baggs explained, with a jerk of the head. "Him in my car out there."

The footman condescended to glance outside.

"You can tell his lordship he may come in," he said. "The young ladies are in the morning room."

Baggs delivered his message and sat in agony in the car for a quarter of an hour. He became a little less perturbed

when he reflected that the rooms which he had visited last night were chiefly at the back of the house. Lord Robert came out at last and Baggs gave a little jump as he heard what seemed to him to be a familiar voice in the hall.

"So sorry, Bobbie, but we had a lovely spin before breakfast this morning. You must try us again another time."

The young man came down the steps and took his place once more in the car. Baggs was uncertain whether he was standing on his head or his heels. Then, as they glided off, he remembered the extraordinary assimilation, which no doubt extended also to the voice, going on all the time between young ladies of position and their confidential hand-maidens.

"Gave me quite a turn, though," he admitted to himself a little later on.

"Take the car back and wait for orders, Baggs," his employer directed. "The young ladies can't come out this morning."

"Shall you be requiring me to-night, sir?" Baggs asked, with his heart in his mouth.

His lordship shook his head.

"No! You can tell Charles to bring me the electric round at seven o'clock."

Baggs heaved a sigh of relief and spent most of the rest of the day indulging in pleasurable anticipations, which for once were entirely gratified. It was quite the proudest moment of his life when at a little before nine o'clock he entered the long dancing hall of the Spinner Street Dancing Academy, with Ruth and her sister.

"There's nothing to speak of in the way of ceremony here," he explained to them confidentially, "but don't you dance with anyone you don't fancy the looks of. My pal will look after you, Miss Christabel, and you'll find me pretty hard to get rid of," he whispered to Ruth. "Here you are, Freddy," he called out to a young man who was approaching them a little sheepishly. "Want to introduce my pal, young ladies—Mr. Frederick Bolster—Miss Ruth and Miss Christabel, other name not signifying. Now Freddy, if you'll look after Miss Christabel a bit, we'll have a turn. You'll excuse Freddy not

being in evening dress? He's at a shipping house in the city where they keep 'em pretty late. Here we go, then, Miss Ruth. You don't mind a hop, now and then? Seems to give a bit of life to a waltz, I always think."

"I adore it," Ruth assented. "Come on."

The evening was an immense success. Baggs was pestered with inquiries concerning his two friends, whose costume and looks met with universal approval, but he shook his head portentously in reply to all demands for an introduction.

"Young ladies out on the quiet," he confided. "Don't want to make any acquaintances except with Freddy and myself."

"And a little bit of all right they are!" Freddy remarked, mopping his brow. "Licks me where you picked 'em up, Harry. You do have the luck, and no mistake."

"It isn't altogether luck," Mr. Baggs pointed out. "It's just letting them see at once that you know how to behave like a gentleman. Come on, old fellow; they'll be missing us."

THE only blot on an otherwise perfect evening, so far as Mr. Baggs and his friend were concerned, was that their young lady companions insisted upon only one taxi for the return home, and begged them not to dismount for fear of causing jealousy in the servants' quarters. That they had enjoyed themselves, however, was beyond doubt. Ruth lay back in her corner and laughed till the tears came into her eyes, and her sister was almost light-hearted. Just as they were preparing to descend, Ruth leaned forward.

"You must promise me one thing," she insisted. "The old lady is letting us have a servants' ball on Thursday. You must both come, if you please, at ten o'clock."

"No fear of us forgetting that," Baggs declared heartily.

"Not likely!"

"Wouldn't you care," Ruth asked, glancing at Mr. Baggs with a queer little smile upon her lips, "to bring your young lady?"

"Thank you," Mr. Baggs replied boldly, although for a moment a pathetic little vision drifted before his eyes, "you're all the young lady I want!"

She slapped his hand and laughed once more.

"Don't be silly! I hope I am, but still, you do owe her a good turn, you know. There'll be heaps of young fellows here, and we're really short of girls. You give me her name and address and I'll send her a card."

"Mightn't be altogether pleasant for me," Mr. Baggs grumbled.

"Booby!" Ruth exclaimed derisively. "I'll take care of you."

Baggs handed her an envelope and she got out, waving her hand. The two young men watched the girls disappear.

"Dash it all, I feel like a prince!" Baggs declared, leaning back in his seat. "Savoy, chauffeur!"

"Don't be an ass!" Freddy protested. "You drive to the corner of the square and put us down there, driver. I know where we can get a quiet bite to eat, only a few yards away."

"Righto!" Mr. Baggs acquiesced sentimentally. "Seems a bit thick, I suppose, driving about in taxies, but when a chap's feeling like I am, Freddy—"

"Oh, chuck it!" his friend protested. . . . "Do you happen to have noticed the color of Chris' eyes?"

A LITTLE later than the appointed hour on Thursday evening, Mr. Harry Baggs and Mr. Frederick Bolster, arm-in-arm, approached the house in Belgrave Square. They wore tweed caps and carried brown paper parcels, containing their dancing pumps, under their arms. As they reached the front door they stopped, a little aghast. A striped canvas awning was up, stretching from the front door to the edge of the curbstone. The area was dark and lifeless.

"Doing it slap up, for a servants' ball," Mr. Bolster remarked nervously.

"Thought a lot of in the family, Ruth is," Mr. Baggs replied, with an attempt at confidence. "Come on."

Each clutching his parcel, they strode up the druggetted way, past a

policeman and several footmen. Their arrival was taken, apparently, quite as a matter of course, and a beneficent person in somber black indicated the way to the gentlemen's cloakroom. The sight of its contents inspired Mr. Baggs with a moment's irresolution. Everywhere were neat little mounds of black overcoats with silk linings, and either silk hats or opera hats.

"There aren't two dances on here, by any chance, are there?" he inquired a little anxiously.

The cloakroom attendant shook his head, and the major domo, who had followed them in, smiled reassuringly.

"It's quite all right, gentlemen," he said. "You are expected. This way, if you please."

Mr. Baggs took a final look at himself in the mirror and on the whole was satisfied. The little curl to the left of his parting was carefully arranged with becoming negligence. His white tie, which had only done duty once before, showed some tendency to depart from the exact center, but its peregrinations were atoned for by the fact that it displayed a collar stud which professed to have a small diamond in the center. Scarcely more than an inch of his lilac-bordered handkerchief was showing, and his white waistcoat, although unusually stiff, was in other respects a complete success. Nevertheless, when he stepped into the ballroom his confidence for a moment oozed away. He was conscious of a sudden inclination to retreat, and he felt a vigorous and sympathetic tug from Frederick at his coat-tails. Before he could speak, however, Ruth, who had been dancing, came suddenly up to him with the most charming of smiles.

"How dare you come so late, Mr. Baggs! Dance with me at once, please. My sister is looking for your friend. Come!"

Mr. Baggs set his teeth, but it needed all his courage to place his hand reverently around the waist of this white-satin-clad apparition. In a moment or two they were dancing, and as he really danced quite well, and his partner wonderfully, he soon lost his nervousness.

"If this is a servants' dance—" he muttered to her.

She laughed softly.

"I've all sorts of things to confess presently, Mr. Baggs," she whispered.

They danced to the last bar of the music. Then she rested her fingers upon his arm. A young man who was passing accosted them.

"Lady Ruth," he protested, "do you know that was my dance? I—"

He stopped short. Baggs felt for a moment that he was sinking through the ground. It was his employer who was surveying him, his expression one of blank amazement.

"God bless my soul!" Lord Robert gasped. "Why, it's Baggs!"

"You know Mr. Baggs?" Lady Ruth murmured sweetly.

"Hang it all!" the young man exclaimed. "Know Mr. Baggs? Well—er—yes!—well, I suppose I do know you, don't I, Baggs?"

"Certainly, my lord," Baggs replied, a little dizzy.

A third person suddenly intervened. He was an elderly gentleman who smiled very pleasantly at Baggs and drew him to one side.

"My daughter has forgotten to introduce us," he said, "but you and I are going to have a glass of wine together, Mr. Baggs. Christabel, bring Mr.—Mr. Bolster, isn't it?—here," he added, as Christabel and her partner approached. "Mr. Bolster, I am very pleased to meet you. I am Lord Cullerden. We are going to take a glass of wine together. Robert, wont you join us?"

"Delighted, sir," Lord Robert murmured.

THE four passed through an open door into a room where many bottles of champagne were set out at a long buffet. Lord Cullerden led the way to a small table, and at a sign from him a footman brought some champagne and four glasses. Mr. Baggs sat on the extreme edge of his chair and secretly pinched himself.

"Mr. Baggs," Lord Cullerden proceeded, "I really feel that I owe you an apology. I have—some people say for



Ruth, who had been dancing, came suddenly up to him with the most charming of smiles. "How dare you come so late, Mr. Beggs! Dance with me at once, please. My sister is looking for your friend. Come!"

my sins—two daughters of whom I am very fond and very proud, but who are, alas! notorious amongst their friends in London for their wild escapades, sometimes conducted, I am sorry to say, without reference to the feelings of others. My daughter Ruth was foolish enough to make a bet with Lord Robert here that she would go to a picture show, or some other place of entertainment, unattended, passing herself off as her own lady's-maid, make acquaintance with some young man to whom she should not be introduced, bring him to her dance to-night and waltz with him. You, Mr. Baggs, I regret to say, are the victim of my daughter's foolish propensity for joking, and you, Mr. Bolster, of Lady Christabel's imitative faculties."

Mr. Baggs sat quite still for a moment. The world seemed falling away around him.

"Then Ruth," he said slowly, "doesn't exist at all? She is Lady Ruth—your daughter?"

"That is so," Lord Cullerden admitted. "It was a foolish trick of hers, but she was fortunate in having met some one like yourself, Mr. Baggs, whom we are pleased to see here to-night. Now finish up your wine and we will go back to the ballroom."

Mr. Baggs and his friend exchanged covert glances. The former rose slowly to his feet.

"I think, sir, if you'll excuse me," he began.

"Don't go on my account, Baggs," Lord Robert intervened pleasantly.

"You know one another?" Lord Cullerden remarked.

"Mr. Baggs does me the honor to be my chauffeur."

"Capital!" Lord Cullerden exclaimed. "What an interesting coincidence!"

Lady Ruth came gliding up to the four men.

"Father, have you quite finished with Mr. Baggs?" she asked. "If so, I want him."

"Quite, you outrageous young woman!" Lord Cullerden said. "I have done my best to apologize for you. You had better see what you can do."

"I have something better than an apology for him," Lady Ruth declared. "Come along, Mr. Baggs."

SHE laid her fingers once more upon his arm and led him across the ballroom, down the corridor, and along a familiar passage to the little sitting-room. She pushed open the door.

"There," she said. "I have brought you to see your partner for the next dance."

Baggs gave a little exclamation. Lady Ruth had disappeared, closing the door behind her. . . . Mary rose slowly to her feet. She was wearing a very pretty gown, which Baggs did not recognize in the least, and there was a very becoming flush upon her cheeks. Her eyes were fixed upon him anxiously.

"You are not cross, Harry?" she asked, a little tremulously. "The young lady came down to Thornton Heath this morning. She has made me leave my place. I am to have a position as sewing-maid here. And I think she wants—she wants—"

Baggs took her into his arms. It was astonishing how easily he had stepped out of fairyland.

"I want the same thing, dear," he said.

"The Frame-Up"

by

Harris Dickson

is the story of a gang of politicians who figured out everything—except the way a woman might act in a crisis.

In the next—the
May—issue, on
the news-stands
April 22nd.

"The Making of Mac's"

by

Pelham Grenville
Wodehouse

The story of the girl who "made" a little restaurant—and had her heart broken for reward.



Zeliph, a lanky creature with sparse blond hair, stood, ill at ease, at the kitchen door.

MR. TERHUNE knows life. His fidelity to human nature makes his stories stand out. Never has it shown as it does in this story of a woman's Bogey come true.

The Fear Of the Dark

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "Whose Wife?" etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY DEAN CORNWELL

SAID the grinning big grenadier to the shivering little grenadier at the battle of Inkermann:

"I believe you're scared!"

"Of course, I'm scared," chattered the little grenadier. "And if you were as scared as I am, you'd be running away."

I once saw a guinea-pig fed to a python. As the snake crawled toward its terrified living dinner, the guinea-pig became so panic-stricken as to cease its pitiful efforts to get away. Baring its tiny teeth in futile fury, it charged straight at the monster.

I also knew a newspaper woman, single, self-reliant, ultra strong-minded, middle-aged, who confessed to me that she nightly lowered her folding bed, and then immediately looked beneath it for burglars.

I do not know under which of the foregoing aspects of Fear the case of Irma Wade should be classed. Perhaps under a blend of them all. Certainly under the odd type of terror that is com-

mon, in great or less measure, to every daughter of Eve, from Charlotte Corday down to the woman who faints at sight of a mouse. (And, by the way, no mortal woman holds a mouse in such abject dread as does the otherwise fearless elephant.)

WHEN the Wades moved from the city to The Bungalow, people used to ask Irma if she were not nervous, at night, in the lonely suburb of a suburb, a full quarter-mile away from the nearest house.

To which Irma replied with perfect truth that she was afraid of nothing—except, possibly, the dark, and snakes and water-bugs and spiders and unseen mice.

True, she peered under her bed before she went to sleep, and punched the clothes hanging in her bedroom closet for trace of possible hidden intruder, and she glanced behind the bedroom's muslin window-curtains for the same purpose. But all this was purely me-

chanical, a lifelong habit; a ritual rather than a quest, an hereditary feminine trait of the ages.

In other respects, Irma was without nervousness. And to her, life at The Bungalow was as safeguarded as had been her life at the apartment, before her husband, Truxton Wade, moved to Yarrowhurst as agent and collector for the Development Company—a development company that made two mortgages blossom where one had bloomed before.

The Bungalow was in the center of what had once been a cow-pasture and was now a geometric network of streets. That there were no other houses as yet on this compound rectangle of streets was not the Development Company's fault. The thoroughfares were laid out and named, and the lots were pegged off. There was even an electric light suspended between two poles on the corner, a bare furlong from The Bungalow itself.

Presently, like mushrooms, a colony of frame and concrete houses, with Queen Anne fronts and Mary Ann backs and twin mortgages, would crop up all over his "allotment."

In the meantime, Irma did not find her isolated home at all lonely. Indeed, The Bungalow was quite thickly populated for a seven-room house. There were Irma and her husband and their very wonderful baby, and Hulda, their cook; and there was Asa Zeliph, the pimply-faced young-old man-of-all-work who cut the grass very badly and tended the furnace worse and cleaned the car worst of all and made himself generally useless around the place and slept over the tiny garage. Altogether, The Bungalow was well inhabited.

The only time when Irma was even mildly nervous was on the night of rent day, when, after making his monthly collections, Truxton Wade would bring home an unbelievably big amount of money, and would keep it in his strong-box until he could take it to the city and bank it next morning.

MARCH rent-day brought an equinoctial rain that hardened to sleet as the day went on. As night drew near, the downpour settled to a mixture of

rain and hail and hurricane that made outdoors a horror.

But indoors was passing pleasant. Irma curled up in a big leather chair by the fire and divided her time lazily between reading and playing with Baby. Baby had had croup two nights earlier and still harbored a feverish cold, but he was out of all danger now, the doctor said, if they kept him warm and out of the drafts.

In the early twilight, Hulda, nursing a swollen jaw, drifted from the kitchen and proceeded to harangue her mistress in tones that ranged from a mumble to a squeal. The gist of the stricken hand-maiden's plaint was that the nooralgy had been gittin' worse an' worse all day, till now it was aching her somethin' terrible, and if that tooth wasn't pulled, right off, she couldn't sleep a wink and she honest-to-God believed she'd go crazy, and could she take the five-twenty to the city and have the Day-and-Night Dental Association folks pull it for her?

Irma gave full and sympathetic consent, and Hulda departed to her own regions of The Bungalow, mumbling pain-wracked gratitude.

THREE minutes after Hulda had exhaled from The Bungalow, the front door let in fifty cubic yards of rain-drenched blast accompanied by Truxton Wade. Irma ran out into the hall to meet her husband.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're home," she called as she came. "Hulda has just—why!" she broke off, "you haven't even begun to get out of that streaming coat. Shall I help you, dear? What's the matter?"

For her husband had made no move to divest himself of his trickling outer garment or to kick off his rubbers.

"I've got to go to town," answered Wade. "I—"

"To town?" she echoed. "To the city—to-night? Oh, Trux, can't you wait till morning? It's such a villainous night. And Hulda—"

"I'm sorry, little girl," he comforted her, but consulting the hall clock's dial as he spoke. "I must catch the five-twenty. I found a telegram at the station from the secretary. The Company's

directors are holding a special meeting to-night to decide about the South Meadow option. I've orders to be there. The secretary wants me to dine with him beforehand. The meeting won't be over much before twelve. It never is. That means I can't catch the eleven-thirty-seven, and I'll have to stay in town all night. I'll be out by breakfast. . . . I'm sorry. I'd slide out of it if I could. I'm dog-tired. And besides, I hate to leave you and Baby overnight. But I'll be back on the seven-nine in the morning—because I've got to see Hodgins here at quarter to nine to close the Whorton place deal. Wait breakfast for me, won't you?"

As he talked he was hanging up his drenched cap and taking from the rack a derby, which he brushed with nervous haste. This done, he proceeded to unload from inner pockets various little wads of bills, each bunch separately held together by a rubber band, under which was stuck a memorandum slip. He piled the sheaves of money on the hall table, in hasty disarray.

"I won't have time to put this away before I go," he said. "Will you pack it in the strongbox as soon as I'm gone? And"—his glance returning to the tall clock—"since I'm not going to be here to-night, I don't like to think of the box, with all that cash, being in our room. There's always the off chance of burglars. And the box is too easy to find, there. Suppose—suppose you put it in the bottom of the clock. There's plenty of room in the space beneath the weights. And no one will think of looking for a strongbox in the bottom of a grandfather's clock. It's a good idea. Only—don't forget to rescue it in case of fire."

"You're a cheerful soul!" she said, masking her chagrin under half-laughing satire. "First you tell me you'll be away all night. Then you leave your month's rents here as a bait to thieves. Then you hint that there's danger, both from burglars or fire; and you calmly trot off and leave me alone, to cherish those soothing thoughts."

"Dear!" he cried, all contrition. "I'm so sorry—so sorry! I didn't mean any of it that way. You know I didn't. I'd

never have spoken of burglars or fire—except to guard the rent-money. There isn't a chance in ten million of either one. I—"

"I was only in fun," she checked his remorseful apologies. "And it's all *all* right, Trux. Only—only, can't you take the money to town with you? I hate to—"

"No," he made answer. "If I could, I would. But I've got to be back here before the bank opens. I'd only have to lug it into the city and then out again. It's much safer here. I'll run uptown to-morrow noon and deposit it. You won't forget about putting it into the strongbox just as soon as I'm gone, and putting the strongbox in the clock?"

"I'll remember," she promised him, adding: "And you're not to worry, Trux. We'll be all right, Baby and I—and your precious strongbox full of rent-money."

SHE had decided not to tell him about Hulda's defection. She saw he was uneasy at leaving her. She knew his infinite capacity for worrying over Baby and herself. And she was resolved not to add to that worry by letting him know that she and Baby must sleep alone in The Bungalow that night. Besides, Asa Zeliph, in his cubbyhole room over the little garage, would be within easy call in case of need. And the telephone could summon neighborhood aid still more easily. Therefore she held her peace.

"I wouldn't leave you on such a night as this," Truxton Wade was explaining as he stacked the money parcels and passed a huge rubber band around the whole; "I wouldn't do it, even on the secretary's order, but it wouldn't be wise to rile him or the directors, just now. I'm going to make an opportunity of sounding them, at the meeting to-night, about that Vandringham purchase. I've been figuring it out to-day. And if I can get them to advance me four thousand, two hundred dollars on my salary, and with a second mortgage on this house as collateral, I know I can swing the deal. Just think what it will mean to us, Irma! It will net us an easy twenty-eight thousand dollars within

two years. I know the conditions out there. I know them better than the directors do. And I'm going to play it as a lone hand. If I can wheedle the four thousand, two hundred dollars advance out of those old fossils to-night, that, with what we have, will be enough for me to get hold of the land. It's the chance of our lives, dear girl, the one big gold-edged chance of our lives. It'll lift us clean out of slavery. If only the directors will—"

"Oh, they must! They *must*!" she cried, as eager as he. "Why, it would mean—"

"It would mean so much," he said, grimly, "that I don't like to think too hard about it. I wouldn't have said a word, just now, only I didn't want you to suppose I'd chase away to the city on such a night,—with Baby half-sick, too,—unless there was a mighty good reason for it. I'm late," he finished, hastily, with another glance at the tall clock. "Good-by. Don't worry. Kiss Baby good-night for me."

HE was gone; to be supplanted for an instant by the whirling gust of wet air that tore into the hall from the opening and slamming of the door. Then The Bungalow, of a sudden seemed strangely empty and lifeless. It always did, just after Truxton Wade went away.

Irma went back into the library, stirred up the hearth fire and tucked into place a blanket that Baby had kicked loose. Then she fetched the strongbox, put the money into it and, opening the long door of the clock, deposited the box in the space beneath the dangling weights. After which she remembered that to-night she must get her own dinner, thanks to the absence of the neuralgic Hulda. She went into the tiny kitchen.

There, ten minutes later, Asa Zeliph found her, as he clumped in from the garage after taking Truxton to the train.

Zeliph, a lanky creature, with sparse blond hair, sparser, blonder eye-brows, and skim-milk eyes, stood, ill at ease, in the kitchen doorway, shifting heavily from foot to foot.

"C'n I speak to you, Miz Wade?" he hesitated, as Irma turned from the range to find him standing there.

"What is it, Asa?" she asked, puzzled at his dolorous look and tone. "Have *you* got neuralgia too? If you have, it's too late. The five-twenty has gone. I heard the whistle."

"No'm," he said, solemnly. "No'm. I haven't got nooralgia. All mine's false ones. Been so since I was twenty. No'm. I'm not sick. But"—with a snuffle—"my mother is."

"Oh, I'm sorry!"

"I got word from Dick Houman, just's I was comin' back from the train. He drove past her house to-day, an' my sister hailed him an' asked was he drivin' to Yarrowhurst, an' if he was, would he find me an' tell me that Mother's dreadful low an' keeps a-callin' for me all the time."

He sniffed again, winked his pale eyes and rubbed a sleeve across his lower face.

"I'm ever so sorry, Asa," repeated Irma, "ever so sorry. If there is anything we can do—"

"Yes'm," he said reluctantly. "Yes'm. I was thinkin', maybe—bein' she's so low an' she's callin' for me—I was thinkin' maybe you'd let me go out there to-night. It's only ten miles. Dick Houman's goin' back in a few minutes an' he says I c'n ride out with him. Could I go, Miz Wade? Dick says she's dreadful sick."

"Of course," said Irma, with a gush of pity for the poor, uncouth, all-but-blubbering fellow. "Of course. And if she isn't any better, take your own time about coming back. I'll make it all right with Mr. Wade."

And so sorry for him was she that it was not until he had departed for the night that Irma stopped to realize that she and Baby were left alone in The Bungalow, a quarter-mile from the nearest neighbor.

IRMA ate a lone dinner, put Baby to sleep, read herself drowsy, banked the kitchen fire, examined and re-examined the door and window-fastenings and at ten o'clock betook herself to her bedroom, off the library.



Each time she passed the alcove she glanced furtively toward it. Each time she saw the shadowy outline of the man.

There, after undressing, she duly looked under the bed, prodded the clothes-closet's contents, inspected the space between the muslin curtain and the windows, saw that a box of safety matches and her watch were on the chair beside her pillow, that Baby's crib-covers were moored with safety pins, switched off the light and went to bed.

She got into the bed hastily, swinging her feet over the edge in almost a vaulting motion. Many women do. And for the following strange but well-authenticated reason:

There is a Bogey—a formless Thing with a great many hands—which lurks under beds and on stairways. Over mere man this Bogey has no power. Indeed, no man can be found who is wise enough to believe in its existence. But women—even the very wisest of them—know better. They know that the Bogey's one aim in life is to snatch at their ankles as they step into bed in the dark or as they run scurrying up unlighted stairs. The fact that no woman's ankles have ever yet been seized by it is no proof that some woman's may not be at any future time.

There is one other interesting bit of natural history, worth noting, about this Bogey: Failing to seize ankles on stair- or bed-edges, it is so piqued at the fiasco that It steals downstairs, and there, at dead of night, makes sounds like a burglar trying to get in or a cat trying to get out. Only women can hear these sounds. And only women have the hypnotic power to force sleepy and unbelieving husbands to leave a warm bed and crawl blasphemously downstairs to investigate the sounds.

Irma safely eluded the Bogey's sub-mattress grip. And she was so un-sportsmanlike as to fall asleep before It could proceed to the second and noisier manifestation.

IN the suburbs of the suburbs, midnight is midnight. (In the city, midnight means "only twelve o'clock.") Thus, not merely at twelve, but also at midnight, did Irma Wade awaken from a tiresome dream of haranguing in Latin the Development Company's board of directors, in behalf of Truxton's loan.

She awoke suddenly and completely. She did not know what had waked her. For a space, she lay still. Outside, the storm still roared and squealed and droned. Its racket was tremendous. It was snug to nestle there so warm and cozy and protected and listen to the gale. Then, for an instant, Irma was neither protected nor warm.

A blast of wet and ice-chill air swirled through the house; a sharp breath of it caromed from some wall-angle and into the bedroom, where it slapped peevishly across Irma's face.

At once she was stirred with memories of her doctor's warning against drafts for Baby. But before she could move, the draft had ceased, as suddenly as it had begun. And she was reminded of the same boreal effect that had followed on Truxton's opening and closing of the front door that afternoon.

Her first thought was that her husband had returned. But there was no slam of the door, no familiar tramp of his feet on the squeaky floor-boards.

Moreover, she could hear the wheezy borough-hall clock striking twelve. No train from the city would land Truxton at his own home at precisely that hour.

No, she must look elsewhere for an explanation of the draft. And before she realized what she was doing, she had jumped out of bed, too much excited to fear the Bogey's ankle-snatch. As she got to her feet, her knee struck violently against the chair whereon were the match-box and watch. With a clatter, almost as loud as the din of the storm itself, the chair toppled sideways to the floor, spilling matches and box and watch in every direction.

And close on this hideous noise, Irma was subconsciously aware of another sound, that seemed to come from somewhere in the wide hallway, outside. It might have been a grunt, it might have been a gasp, it might have been the wind, it might have been imagination. It was not repeated.

But it had done its work. The Bogey was at its old tricks. And this time there was no slumbrously protesting spouse to send on a hunt for the noise's source. There was—there was—why, there was no one at all in the house, nor within a

quarter-mile—no one except Baby and herself: she was alone.

And at the realization, her world-old feminine heritage of fear came upon her: the fear of the dark and of the intangible horrors that lurk in the dark. She was afraid, nauseatingly afraid.

SOME one has said that ghosts were invented by the first man who lay awake at night in a lonely house. All the ghosts of all the lonely houses were thronging in upon Irma. She was alone, except for her Baby and for Something—Something that had come into The Bungalow, with a herald-gust of storm-air; Something that had grunted or gasped, as with consternation, when the chair fell.

Irma cowered against the bedpost, her flesh a-quiver, her heart alternately hammering and stopping. Every atom of her shivery body shrank, as though drawing away from the clawing of viewless hands.

Then came from close at hand a sound that halted Irma's heartbeats altogether and at once set them to pattering again. The Baby had waked and was fretting. She reasoned that this fretting was probably what had first awakened her, and that scarce thirty seconds—it seemed as many eons—had passed since then.

Forgetting her sick fear and its cause, Irma put out one hand to the wall, felt for the electric-light switch and turned it. No resultant glare of white illumination answered the gesture. She turned the key backward and then forward again. No light. More than once the youthful suburb of Yarrowhurst had gone dark for a night, due to a mishap at the local power-house. Irma's eyes roved to the window beside her bed. Through it she could see the big arc-light on duty a furlong away, shining valiantly if mistily through the down-sweep of hail and rain. No, the trouble was not with the power-house. It was with The Bungalow itself. And another vague fear began to twist at Irma's nerves.

By main strength, she shook off the terror-impulse, stooped down and began to hunt for the fallen and scattered matches. The net result of a five-second

scooping along the rug was the locating of three matches and the involuntary annexing to her finger-tips of two splinters of glass from the smashed watch-crystal.

The matches, being of the safety brand, would not strike, save on the box. And the box was not at hand. Irma felt for it with outspread fingers and bare feet. She stepped on another piercingly keen shard of glass and hopping thence, trod on and crushed the matchbox.

She picked up the wrecked box, extracted several matches therefrom, located a fragment of the box's prepared surface and struck a light. As by witchcraft, the darkness-ghouls fled, while the familiar outlines of the room took their place.

Irma looked about her, reassured; then she found her bedside slippers and pushed her chilled feet into them. She threw on a wadded wrapper; then, as the match burned her fingers, she dropped it and lighted another. Next, she looked around for means to perpetuate the light.

There were no lamps, no candlesticks in the place, as the Wades relied wholly on electricity. Irma recalled a tiny pink "tree candle" that had glittered solitary and dainty in Baby's "one-year" birthday cake a month earlier. She had saved what was left of the candle, through pretty sentiment, when its brief use had been past. Presently she exhumed it from amid a heap of trifles at the back of the closet's one shelf. She lighted it with her last remaining match. Then she set forth to explore.

The little pink candle shed a wavering and grossly ineffective gleam wherein odd-shaped shadows sprawled and crept. Placing it on the hatrack, with a drop of hot wax to hold it in place, Irma went down the hall toward the kitchen. She knew there must be matches there, perhaps even more and larger candles. The kitchen was draughty, and Irma would not risk the accidental blowing out of her one ray of light by carrying the candle thither.

Halfway down the rather long hall, between front door and kitchen door, was a bay-window—rather, an alcove,

backed by French glass doors that stretched from ceiling to floor and led out onto the veranda. In front of this alcove hung a pair of chintz portières.

As Irma moved down the hall she glanced apprehensively toward these portières, although she had dutifully peeped behind them as usual before she went to bed.

A misted shaft of light from the big arc-lamp on the corner filled this alcove with a faint sheen of refracted glow. And backed by this elusive glow, the half-blurred shape of a man's crouching body was revealed.

Irma could see him quite plainly. There he was, in the alcove, just behind the portières, waiting. His outlines were indistinct, but his presence was undeniable. Even his tense and bent-over pose was easy to make out.

The vision of this crouching body's reflection, cast so dimly on the portière,—the gigantic size of the shadow, its uncouth, unhuman lines,—held Irma motionless and dazed. But only for a fraction of a second. Then flashed to her the thought:

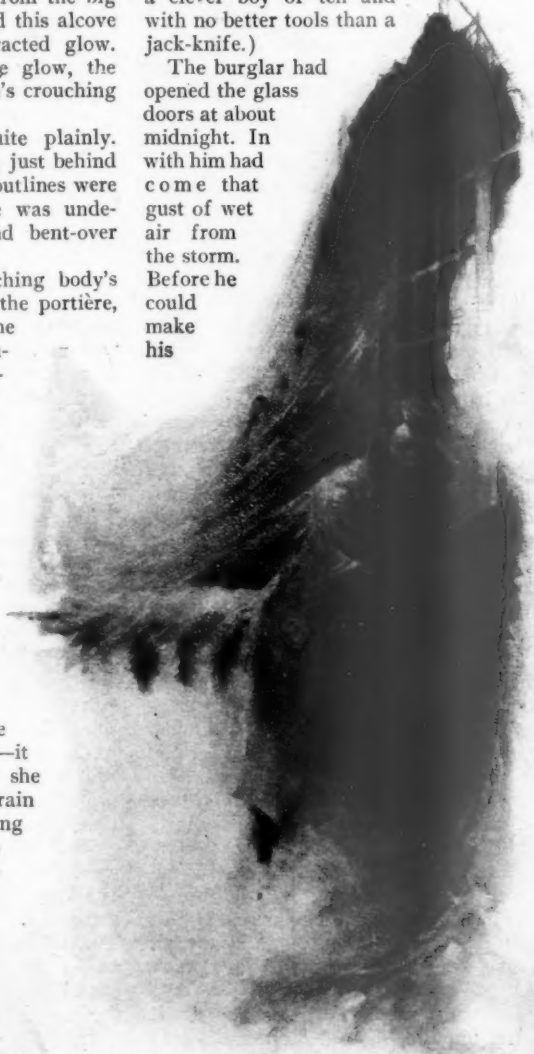
"He doesn't know I know he's there. But if I stop and stare, he'll know."

And with elaborate carelessness she strolled on toward the kitchen, having paused in front of the alcove so brief a space that the check had scarce broken her stride. She even hummed a tune—it sounded discordant and she stopped. All the time, her brain was a-race. She was thinking as clearly, as logically, as ever before in her twenty-six years.

There was a burglar in the house—not a Bogey, this time, but a burglar. It was the crisis she had dreaded—as every woman has dreaded it—from babyhood. And thus ran her thought:

Some one, knowing this was rent-collecting day and that the money was probably in the house, had come in search of the rich loot. It was a goodly haul for even the most jaded professional housebreaker. The man had entered by way of the French glass doors. (Truxton had said their flimsy fastenings could be solved by a clever boy of ten and with no better tools than a jack-knife.)

The burglar had opened the glass doors at about midnight. In with him had come that gust of wet air from the storm. Before he could make his



The burglar was testing the flimsy lock of the French door.

way to one of the rooms, he had heard Irma upset the chair, and he had slipped behind the portières, to wait until the house should be quiet again.

He could not possibly know that the indirect ray of light from the arc-light made him visible to her. Therefore she could easily get out of the house unnoticed, by way of the kitchen, and run for help.

Then, at once, Irma knew she could do nothing of the sort. Perhaps some woman lives who is calm-minded enough to know that a burglar has nothing to gain by killing or even scaring a baby. Perhaps such a woman would not hesitate to leave her only child helpless in the house with a midnight intruder, while she herself went a quarter-mile to summon aid. But if that woman exists, she has absolutely nothing in common with Irma Wade.

It occurred to Irma next to creep back to her bedroom, pick up Baby and carry him with her in her flight. But a fresh onslaught of freezing rain against the house was not needed to remind her of the life-peril in taking a croupy child out into such weather.

After which—Irma had ever a curious way of reasoning from the most difficult end first—she thought of the telephone.

The instrument stood on a bracket near the front door. Still walking aimlessly, Irma turned at the kitchen doorway and strolled back along the hall. Her plan was complete before she reached the telephone. She would say to Central, as fast as she could:

"There is a burglar at the Wade bungalow. Tell the police."

Then she would bolt into her bedroom, and trust to God and to the lock's strength to enable her to keep the baffled thief out, until one or both of Yarrowhurst's two policemen could reach The Bungalow. The idea was good.

The telephone was on the same side of the hall as the alcove, and out of the intruder's range of view. Irma stopped in front of the bracket and lifted the receiver from the hook. She lifted it with infinite caution, so that the hook should not click.

Then she waited. No sleepy "Hello"

from the local Central. Irma moved the hook up and down, carefully and without noise. Again she waited. And between her manipulation of the hook and listening fiercely for a reply, five everlasting minutes limped past. The tiny pink candle guttered and flickered. It was burning low. The lashed rain swished and rapped and tattooed at the windows. And from the crib in the bedroom, Baby began again to fret.

At last the truth came to Irma. Central was not too busy to reply. The reason there was no answer was because the telephone was disconnected. Also, there was no light because the electric supply was cut off—cut off, not from all Yarrowhurst, but simply from The Bungalow. And the woman looked toward the alcove with a new awe. The shapeless creature, hiding there, had evidently taken more than usual pains to isolate his victims.

FOR the first time Irma felt her complete helplessness. The burglar had but to step out of his hiding place at his own leisure. She and everything in the house were wholly at his mercy. She even calculated, in bitter dearth of hope, the precise distance that her very loudest scream could be expected to pierce through the tumult of the storm. She knew that the report of a cannon cracker could scarce be heard for fifty yards above the tempest.

And as before, the easiest way out of the muddle came last of all to her fear-numbed mind. With the hope, again dawned reaction. In the hatrack drawer a pistol was always kept, a thirty-eight-caliber revolver of somewhat ancient pattern but still serviceable. Trux had taken it from his own chiffonier and put it in the hatrack the evening after a drunken tramp had sought to push past Hulda at the front door, some months ago.

Irma glided noiselessly across to the rack and eased open the drawer. Then, heedless of attracting the thief's notice, she began to rummage feverishly. The drawer was half-full of gloves and mufflers and twine skeins and folded paper and such odds and ends as curtain-rings, stray tacks, etc.

But the revolver was not there.

It *had* been there, at the front of the drawer, in plain view, early the preceding afternoon, when Irma had gone thither for string to tie up a parcel.

Her horror reached the apathetic stage as this final prop was knocked from under her. She was helpless—as helpless as Baby himself. She could not escape. She could not defend herself. She could not summon help. She must wait in panic-patience until the lurking brute behind the curtains should tire of needless hiding and step forth into the waning radius of candle-light.

Irma looked at the candle. There was not ten minutes of life left in the futile little scrap of colored wax. Presently it would go out, leaving her to stark blackness—and to the Creature that crouched expectant behind the portière.

The rent-money, indubitably, was what he had come for. She was gripped by a wild impulse to pick up the strong-box from its hiding place in the clock and to thrust it at him, bidding him take it and go away.

But something in her trembling soul made her drive off the impulse. The money belonged to the Company, the Company that trusted Wade. Trux had left the money in her keeping. She would guard it for him, for it was his honor.

Now she became aware that Baby's fretting had changed to a crying fit, as the little fellow had found himself alone and uncomfortable in the dark. And still another idea came to her.

She went into the bedroom, lifted Baby from his crib and wrapped him in a big blanket. Then she carried him out into the hall, walking with him from front door to kitchen and back, soothing his crying into a whimper that presently merged into drowsy little clucks.

Each time she passed the alcove she glanced furtively toward it. Each time she saw the shadowy outlines of the man. He had shifted his position ever so slightly. Once, as she passed, she saw him shift it again. As she paced back and forth, she crooned, motherwise, to her little son, yet chanting each word with the utmost clearness, exhorting the fretful child thus:

"S-s-s-h-h-h! Don't cry! You don't want to wake poor sleepy Uncle Dan, do you, precious? And Cousin Walter sleeps so lightly, too! We must be careful not to cry and wake him up. Or if you kept on crying so loudly, James might think it was a lion roaring and he might come downstairs here with that horrid shotgun of his and try to shoot it. Come back to bed with Muvver. Maybe if we creep back on tiptoe, Daddy won't wake up at all and scold us. Come!"

She ceased her dreadful sentry-go and carried Baby back to his crib. She collapsed on the edge of her own bed and sat there.

"I'll give him a clear field to get away," she told herself. "And if he thinks there are so many men in the house, he's sure to."

She waited for the blast of outer air that should tell her of the man's departure. But at the end of half a minute she could not stand the strain any longer. Something stronger than her fear-paralyzed self drew her out into the hall. She looked toward the alcove in an anguish of hope.

But the silhouetted form was still there.

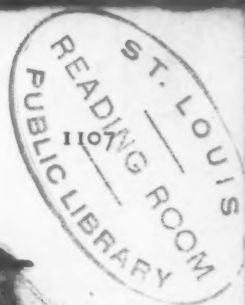
"He knows!" she wailed frantically to herself. "He knows! He knows there's no one here. He knows Trux is away. He cut the 'phone wires and the light wires. He took the pistol. He knows the money's here. But—but he can't know *where* it is!"

The candle's seconds were numbered. Presently this man and the Dark would be supremé in The Bungalow. There was but a fragile shell of light between her and black Horror.

SOMETHING in her head seemed to break. And all at once Fear passed into its final and supreme stage—the stage which makes the guinea-pig charge the python.

Irma darted into her husband's study and snatched Trux's straight-stemmed meerschaum pipe from its rack. Returning to the hall, she stood straight in front of the alcove and leveled the pipe at the silhouetted body. The candle-light was dim and her back was toward

THE FEAR OF THE DARK



it, leaving in shadow her extended arm and what she held.

"I see you!" she cried, shrilly. "And I have you covered with this pistol. I can't miss at such close range. If you do not back out through those windows before I count three, I shall kill you. One—"

The smooth surface of the pipe slipped through her numb fingers.

Trux Wade's adored meerschaum fell to the floor, where it broke in three. And Irma went quite out of her head. The guinea-pig charged.

She could not bear

for another instant to have that crouching indistinguishable Monster lurk behind the curtains glaring at her with his awful and unseen eyes. Suspense had passed the snapping point. Anything was better than to wait.

She sprang at the portières and ripped them apart. There, a pistol clutched in his bony hand, stood Asa Zeliph.

An all-but-invisible Something, hiding behind curtains, had driven Irma crazy with terror. The sight of a mere mortal man—armed invader though he was—caused a sharp revulsion that well-nigh made her faint with utter relief. The Unseen was terrible. Asa Zeliph was merely ridiculous.

IRMA staggered weakly against the alcove arch and laughed until she cried. The spasms of merriment that bordered on hysteria shook her like ague and all but strangled her.

Asa Zeliph looked on, with drooping jaw, at the amazing exhibition. He had expected screams, tears, perhaps a swoon. His vacant brain was at a loss to handle this crassly unforeseen turn.



When the burglar groped downward into the well of the clock, her finger tightened spasmodically on the trigger.

"Oh, Asa!" panted the woman, feeble with laughter. "You'll be the death of me! I was so scared! And all the time it was just—just you."

"If you'll keep quiet while I get that cash, Miz Wade," blustered Asa, "an' if you'll swear on the Book that you wont ever tell—"

"While you get the money?" panted Irma with a fresh onset of laughter. "While you get it? Why, Asa!" she broke off, speaking sternly as if to a bad child, "I'm ashamed of you. *Ashamed* of you! You've been treated so well, here, and you pay us by trying to turn burglar. And that lie about your sick mother! And cutting our wires and all! And stealing our pistol, too! Yes, that *is* our pistol. I recognize it. *Give* it to me, I say! *At once!*"

She dominated the man's shiftless mind as a mahout rules his elephant. Her staccato sentences were like the master's whip-snap to the rebellious slave. Her eyes—fearless, wholly masterful—gripped and cowed him. And when, on the heels of her command, she suddenly reached forth and snatched the wabbling pistol by the barrel and jerked

it out of his grasp, Asa was so dumfounded that he did not think to tighten his fingers over it in time. He was not used to suddenness, either in life or in work. He was delightfully incompetent in crises.

Thus it was that he stood foolishly, goggle-eyed, watching the woman turn the revolver on him, and wondering dully why his beautiful plans had so swiftly and so amazingly miscarried.

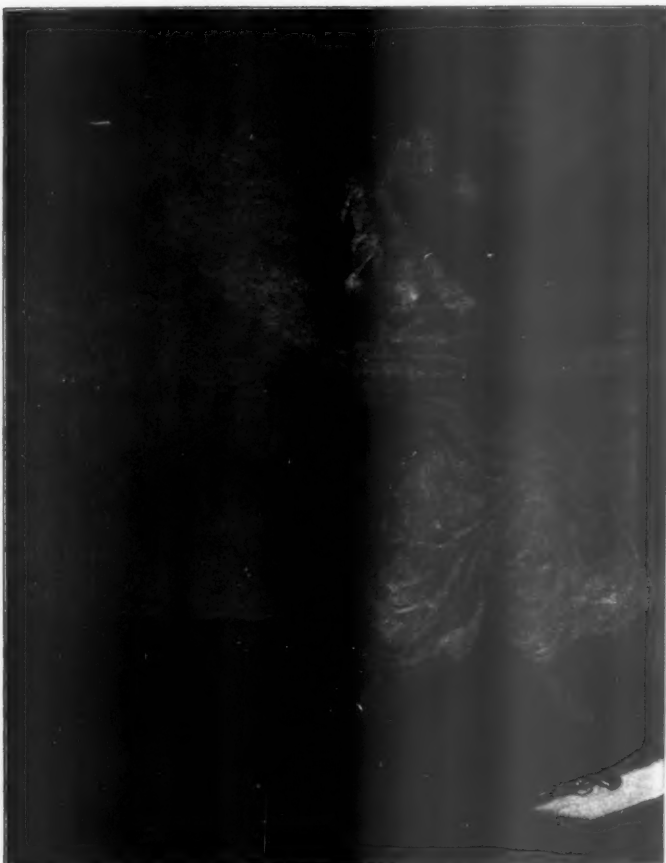
But a pointed revolver was an argument which it did not remotely occur to him to resist. He had lost his carefully prepared chance for a fortune—also his nerve. He had been disarmed. Now he would probably go to prison. He wouldn't ever 'a'

believed it of gentle little Miz Wade. It was horribly disappointing. He began to cry.

"And now," Irma resumed, "I'm going to sit down. And you're going to stand there till morning. And if you try to run away I'm going to shoot you. It's your own fault that you must stand up all the rest of the night. You could have slept very comfortably in a cell, if you hadn't been silly enough to cut those wires."

"I didn't cut no wires!" sniffled Asa. "Honest, I didn't, Miz Wade. I swear to Gawd!"

And somehow, she knew the poor craven was speaking the truth. Yet—



The flashlight went out and the intruder

the wires were disconnected. If not Asa, then who—? The laughter-slain ghost of Fear tried to crawl back into her soul.

"If you mean the tel'phone an' 'lectric wires," he was whining, "they're all a mess of a snarl, out yonder in the yard. I durn near broke my neck over 'em. The storm must 'a'—"

The candle-end flared—and went out. "Stand where you are!" coolly ordered Irma, "—between me and that electric light on the corner out there. I have you nicely covered. If you try to move into the dark on either side of the alcove, I'll—"

She broke off short, a gasp choking



that he was moving stealthily toward the house.

"Did you lock these French doors behind you when you come in?" she asked Asa.

"Yes'm," he answered, surprised at the irrelevant query. "Yes'm. I locked 'em. I was afraid they'd blow open an' the wind would wake you. I—Holy Mack'rel! Look-a-there!"

He had turned to glance at the doors as he was answering her question. They both saw a man's head appear over the veranda edge. As they gazed, they saw the newcomer draw himself up on the veranda, throw a leg over the rail and then tiptoe across to the French doors.

Asa Zeliph's teeth now began to click together.

Forgetful of

slumped thuddingly to the floor.

the flow of her quiet threat. Now that there was no light in the house, the former faint glow from the corner arc-lamp cast a far brighter and more distinct radiance, not only in the alcove but along the patch of veranda outside. Also the smother of rain and hail had slackened, leaving the path of illumination all the clearer.

And, unconsciously glancing over Asa Zeliph's bent shoulders, as she talked, Irma had seen the black figure of a man cross this path of light, just beyond the veranda rail.

The glimpse was momentary; but it was enough to show her that the stranger was big and strongly built and

Irma's threat, he slipped out of the alcove and into the hallway, cowering close against the wall.

"It's—it's a burglar!" he whispered, his words mushy with fright.

Irma, to her own mild astonishment, felt no fear at all. She was armed. There was a man in the house with her. A poor, shivering, broken reed of a man, but none the less a member of the sex to whose aid many an enlightened and gloriously independent woman is still fain to cling in moments of physical peril. Moreover, her nature had that night been crammed with all the fear it would hold.

The burglar was leaning down, as if

testing the flimsy lock of the French doors. He had in his hand something that looked like an ordinary pocket knife. This he was slipping along the crack between the frame-strip and the door jamb. Presently the spring lock snapped back and one of the double doors opened.

So fast, so deftly, did the thief work, that the door was open and shut behind him and he was in the alcove, before Irma could clearly follow his motions. He stepped into the hallway on silence-shod soles and passed close enough to the motionless Irma for her to have touched him. There, for a brief space, he paused. He was apparently listening. Irma held her breath. So, evidently, did Asa Zeliph, for the stranger seemed assured that no one had heard him.

Straining her ears—she could no longer see him—Irma heard his almost inaudible footfalls cross the hall. There was infinite caution in the tread, but no hint of uncertainty. Straight along the hallway her ears followed the man's progress, and to the corner where stood the clock. Then she heard him pause and fumble for something.

The sword-blade of a pocket flashlight cut the dark. It was leveled on the clock. Behind it, Irma could see the silhouette-bulk of the man's body, against the light his flash threw upon clock and wall.

With no hesitation at all, except to look once around him, the burglar opened the clock door and stooped to put his free hand down into the space beneath the weights.

IT was then that Irma fired.

She had not known she was going to fire. She had not noted that the old-fashioned revolver was at full cock. When the burglar groped downward into the well of the clock, her forefinger tightened on the trigger. That was all.

The man's right leg crumpled under him as though it had turned to hot tallow. That much Irma saw before the flashlight went out and the intruder slumped thuddingly to the floor.

Then she heard herself say very matter-of-factly to the bellowing Asa Zeliph:

"Stop that noise! If you have a match, strike it and give it to me."

Mechanically, Asa tried to obey. But his clammy fingers trembled too much to tear a match from the paper card he had pulled from his pocket. Irma felt her way to where he stood, found the match-card, took it from him and with steady hand tore off and struck a match.

Holding aloft the small flame, she went over to the man who sprawled groaning and twisting on the floor, his bullet-pierced leg beneath him. His up-turned face showed plain, as the match died.

In his hiding place against the farther wall, Asa Zeliph cowered and listened, through the dark. For a space there was hideous stillness. Then he heard Irma Wade's voice, queer and throaty:

"Trux! Oh—Trux!"

Irma's voice seemed to pierce the wounded man's pain-swoon. He began to mumble at her, incoherently, as in delirium. Crouching over her husband, she half-heard, half-guessed at his words.

"The directors," he was muttering, "got through early. I caught the eleven-thirty-seven. I couldn't find my key. I came through the windows—so as not to wake you and Baby. I wanted to see if the money was safe—"

"What's that he was a-sayin', Miz Wade?" queried Asa, stumbling forward.

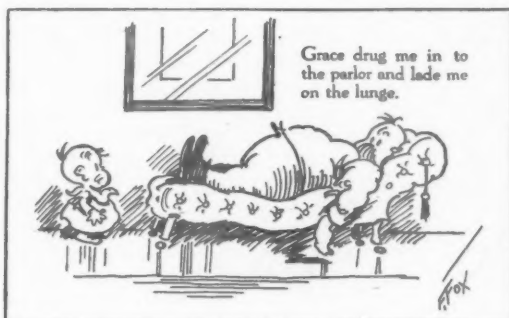
"He said," answered Irma's voice, brisk, businesslike, impersonal, "he said he lost his latchkey. So he came in by the window. Run to Dr. Boyne's and get him here as quickly as you can. Hurry now!"

Asa blundered out, still sniffing. And once more the Dark claimed its own.

Truxton Wade's mind began to clear from its daze of shock and pain. The bullet had nipped a clump of lower-leg muscles. The first torture was already subsiding.

But to the woman who crouched moaning there in the dark beside her victim, not knowing whether or not he could live until help and light should reach them—to her, the word *fear* was just beginning to define itself. For the first time in all her life, she *feared*. She knew now that hitherto—even earlier to-night—she had merely been *afraid*.

FRED GROSS, that naïve detective created and made famous by Ring Lardner, has taken his pen in hand again. In this, the first of a new series of letters which resulted, he tells of his experiences with whooping cough and the stock market.



War Bribes

By Ring W. Lardner

Author of "The Letters of a Bush Leaguer."

Allison. Ill. Aug. 12.

EAR Bro. Charley.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. FOX

D Well Charley its been a long wile sence I wrote you a letter but 2 of the kids has had whopping cough and I been under the weather my self and I dont like to write when they aint nothing but bad news to write. The news aint no better now Charley but I guess youd think we was all dead if I didnt write pretty soon. Well Charley theys been a few times in the last 2 mos. when I almost wisht I was dead the way things has been brakeing for me.

If Grace had of pade a tension to me we wouldnt of had no sick childern on our hands and I wouldnt of been sick my self if the childern hadent because the trubble with me was laying awake nights lissening to them whopp and I coulndent get no sleep for over 2 wks. so no wonder I give out.

They was a epidemis of whopping cough all a round town and Grace knowed a bout it and probly would of kept our kids in the house if I hadent

said some thing to her a bout it and of coarse the minute I says she had better keep them in the house she swelled up and chaste them out the doors and left them run all a round the neighborhood. Well 1 day little Fred showed up with a bad cold and in a day or 2 he beggin to cough and then the little 1 caught it and Grace says we better send for the Dr. What for I says. We know what theyve got and theys only 1 thing to do and that is leave them cough there heads off till they get over it. But Grace says may be it wasent whopping cough but some thing worse. So I says Yes I suppose its hard to tell what they got from there simpsons. They been exposed to this here 1 disease and now there both coughing jest the way evry other kids been coughing all over town so I suppose they got gout or some thing.

So Grace says suppose your right for onct and they have got whopping cough what do we do for it. Nothing I says accept wisht we was deaf. Well says Grace if Drs. cant do nothing for it

why is it that other perants calls them in when there childerns got it. So I says it was because other perants probly had wifes that didnt throw all there money a way on close and so 4th. and then Grace beggin whinning a bout how carefull she was and how much she had saved up sence we bought the propty out here. So I says all right then go a head and spend what youve saved up on a Dr. to come and tell us it aint leppersy or the hoof and mouth disease that the kids has got. So she says I havent got no money but the way I saved it was not asking you for it. So I says all right get a Dr. that saves his money by not asking for none.

But wile I was down town she sent for the Dr. and he come and what do you think he told her. He says the 2 kids both had whopping cough and take good care of them and dont leave them run a round and expose other kids and he would drop in evry day and see how was they geting a long. So he come in preffy near evry day for 2 mos. and charged \$1 and a 1/2 for lissening to them cough 10 minutes and I lissened to them 12 hrs. per day and got nothing not even sleep.

Well finely 1 morning I was seting at the breakfast table and all of a sudden I got dizzy and loggy and couldnt eat nothing or even get up so Grace drug me in to the parlor and lade me on the lunge and I had her call up the chief and tell him I couldnt get down and then I ast her to call up the Dr. and she says he would probly drop in dureing the day so they wasent no use geting him to make a special call and charge for it.

Thats right I says call the Dr. for the kids when you know what theyve got but leave me lay here and die before the Dr. comes and you do

know weather Ive got heart disease or a stroke. She says I know what you got all right because you woke me up last night when you brought it home. I says what do you mean and she says you better cut out them banquits.

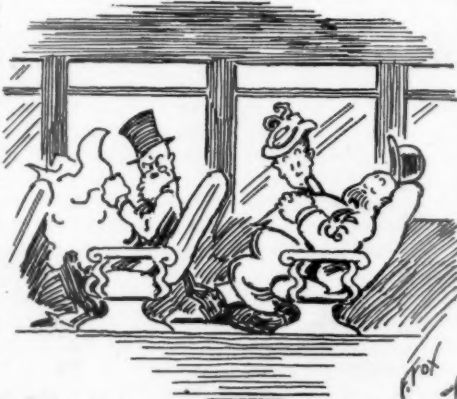
What do you know a bout that Charley a man cant take a glass of beer without your wife wants to send you to a cure some wheres. I guess you know that they aint enough in the world to make me sick but I had to lay there in aggonny till the Dr. come in to see the childern in the P. M. and then he told me I was billius and he couldnt of surprised me more if he had of said they was a war. He give me some pills and told me to take 1 evry hour with 1/2 a glass of water but I cut down the dose of pills evry time and dumbled the amt. of water.

The next A. M. I felt a little better but it wouldnt never done to go to work or Grace would of pulled some more of that banquit stuff so I lade a round the house a couple more days but couldnt get no rest on acct. of the whopping and finely I figgured out where Id be better off working so as I could sleep going in on the train back and 4th.

Well the Dr. sent in a bill the 1 of July and thats the time I ode for my intrust on my lone down to the bank and I had to borry off of the chief to pay the intrust and I desided to leave the Dr. wait a month for his and when the bill come the 1 day of August it was \$6.00 more then the 1st. 1 and we

hadent seen him the hole month of July but he wrote that his bookeeper had made a misstake in the other bill.

And then 2 wks. a go Grace gets ast to a card party and says she aint got nothing fit to ware and I says wheres all the close you bought last winter and she says shes still got



I could sleep going in on the train back and 4th.

them yet but they was winter close and did I want her to roast to deth so I says you might as well roast is starve but she done the old gag of geting ready to cry and there gos \$14.50 for a party dress. And the party where she gos to they play action bridge a game she dont know nothing a bout it and play for money to and she loose \$2.45.

So you see why I havent wrote for a long wile Charley because I been waiting till they was good news to write a bout but I guess they aint no use waiting or you might probly die of old age beffore you herd from me. Regards to Mary.

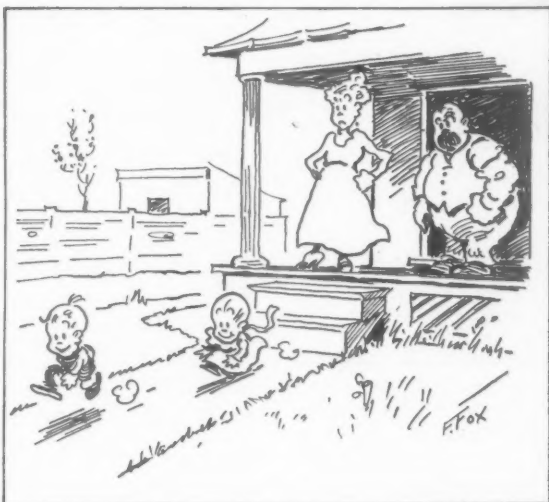
Your Bro. FRED A. GROSS.

Allison. Ill. Aug. 29.

BROTHER CHAS. Well Chas. here I am writing to you again and it aint because theys any good news to write but to ask a favor of you Chas. Of coarse I know the liveing expences is high in NY. city but you havent had no sickness in your family and not buying no house so I thought may be you could help me out for a little wile in the way of a small lone.

I wouldnt ask you Charley if they was any body else I could turn to but I all ready got a \$100 dollars from the chief and cant bother him again and Graces old man is whinning a bout hard times and I guess hes a bout down to his last \$50000 dollars and you couldnt pry him lose from a nichol with a crow-bard so your the 1 I half to turn to and it aint much I want to get off of you only \$100 to keep us going till we get some of our bills payed up.

If you leave me take a \$100 till the 1st. of Oct. it would be a grate acomadation and wile it wouldnt put us on easy St. it would help us out a hole lot and I wouldnt be worring all the wile a bout the bucher and groser. They



Of course the minute I says she had better keep our kids in the house she swelled up and chaste them out of doors.

talk a bout a detective haveing a soft graft Charley and I guess some people thinks all as we half to do when we want a \$1000.00 or so is walk up to some crook on the st. and tuch them but if theys any grafting going on amungst the detectives here in Chi they mannage to deal me out of it and of coarse you know I wouldnt do nothing crookit or mix up in any thing that wasent O.K. and above the bords even if I was starving to deth.

Well any way Charley wear up against it and may be will half to forfit our house if some body dont help us out and as far as Im concerned I wisht we hadent never saw this proptly or built no house because we havent had nothing but bad luck sence we left the south side. I hope you can help us out Charley to the extend of a \$100 and I would promuss to give it back in Oct. a bout the 15 of the month and would be per-fically willing to pay you intrust at 6 percent per annum though I guess you wouldnt hardly stand for me doing that hay Charley.

Give my kindest to Mary. I guess you know how fond I am of Mary and evry thing else thats you and yours Charley.

Your Bro.

F. A. GROSS.



She done the old gag of geting ready to cry and there gos \$14.50 for a party dress.

Allison. Ill. Sep. 15.

CHARLEY. Well Charley I suppose you know your own business best and Im sorry your up against it but I guess you aint no wheres near in the same fix like I been in for the last 5 mos. and I guess you know that if I could help you out I would do it. Im sorry you couldnt see your ways clear to grant the small faver I ast off of you but we will forget it Charley and not say no more a bout it. Bygones is better forgot Charley and of coarse it wont make no diffrents in my feelings tords you and Mary though I should think Mary could get a long a wile on the close shes got to help out a member of her own famly you might say. Its all right though Charley and we will forget it and say no more a bout it.

Graces old man thawed out and come threw with a couple \$100 for Graces berth day and helped us out a lot but its jest chickens food with a man like he and he could of trippled the amt. with out never feeling it. Thats the way with some people the more they get the harder it is to pry it off of them. He aint got no wife to buy close for but if it aint that allibi its some thing else.

This would of been a grate time to have money Charley. I dont mean no small amts. like a \$100 or 2 \$100 but real money. Im in a position where I get tips on the stock markit strate from head quarters and heres jest the time when a man could clean up a bbl. of

money and me with out a nichol you might say and wandring where the next months bills is comeing from. If I had of had 4 or \$5000 say this last month I would of trippled the money with out turning a hare and if I had of wanted to gambol that is buy on the margins instead of buying out rights Id of cleaned up enough to quit and live the rest of my life on the intrust. This aint no night mayor Im givinge you Charley but the strate stuff. But of coarse I wouldnt run no wrist like buying on a margin but I would of boughten the stocks right out and held on to them until I got the

tip to sell.

Some of the boys was lucker than me and a lot of them cleaned up good buying on the margins and they kept asking me why didnt I get in and I had to tell them I didnt beleive in gambolling with stocks though of coarse you couldnt hardly call it gambolling when you buy right out because if the stock dont go up like they said it would still its worth what you give for it unlest it gos down a little and they aint no chance of that on the tips we been geting.

The stocks we been geting the hot tips on is what they call the war bribes and the reason they call them that is on acct. of the Co. that you buy there stock is making amunitions of war for the armys over in europe and of coarse the armys has to give them big bribes to get the work done.

The steal Cos. is the ones thats making the most money because they can make bullits and riffles and shells and so 4th. but theys other Cos. to thats in on it like some of the automobile plants and boat factorys and so 4th. Of coarse there all chargeing hugh prices for the stuff they sell because they can get what ever they want and bessides theys danger in making them things because suppose they was a french spy caughted some factory making shells for the servias he would probly tell his country a bout it and theyd send some body over to blow up the plant with dinahmite.

Of coarse the factorys keeps there self

garded pretty close and dont leave no strangers hang a round unlest they know them and so far they aint been nothing blew up to speak of and in the mean wile the factorys is working night and day and there stocks is sky high that is some of them and the rest of them still low yet but bound to go up and it would be a grand time now for the few of us that knows a bout them to get in on the ground flr.

Look what bethlehem steal done. A few mos. a go it was \$50 a share allmost nothing you might say. And now its up a round \$500.00. Well supose a man had of knew a bout it and had a \$100 dollars to spare. He could of boughten 2 hundred shares right out and now he would be worth a \$100 thousand dollars. Pretty rotten hay Charley. I guess I wouldnt never refuse you no lone if Id got in on that and I probly would of to if I hadent of been flat broke at the time. But I wouldnt call it no lone Charley but would give you the money for a xmas present.

And then theys Gen. Moders plant and hes making some thing for the war and I dont even know witch side hes on. There was an other stock that started a way down and now its up a round \$500.00 a peace.

Theys any No. of stocks jest like them 2 thats sored way up in the last few mos. and then theys some more that aint started yet but is going to start just as sure as Im writeing this letter and here I am with out no money to get in on them with it. Its a crime Charley. I dont beleive in gambolling in the stock markit but they wouldnt be no gambolling a bout this when you get the info strate from the front.

The chiefs cleaned up a bunch of money and hes after me all the wile to go in with him. Well I might may be dig up enough some wheres to go in on margins but I wont never do that and I havent no wheres near enough to buy right out. I wisht some body would come a long and offer me what I got in this here house and proptly and you can bet I wouldnt loose no time grabing them off. And when Id made my little pile in the markit I guess I could build a house that would make this I look like

the ones little Fred builds with his blocks.

Well Charley Im sorry you couldnt see your ways clear to help me out but they wont be no bad feelings between the 2 of us on that acct. and we will try and forget it.

Your bro.

F. A. GROSS.

Allison. Ill. Oct. 23.

BRO. CHAS. Well Charley may be in a little wile from now we will be moving out of here and buy a house on the L. S. and M. S. drive or some wheres. Im a stock exchange man now Charley and dont be suprised if you see in the papers where Morgan and Carmody and them fellows is borrowing money off of me and asking my advise a bout what to buy and so 4th.

Laying all jokes to I side I stand to make a pretty good peace of money say a bout a \$1000 and may be a hole lot more then that amt. but its pretty near a cinch it will be at least a \$1000.

The other day I figgured out where we was all out of dedt that is accept the intrust and payment on the house witch wont be do till Jan. 1 and Id payed back the \$100 Id got off of him so I made it up in my mind that they wasent no use of me leaveing all these here war bribes get away from me so I got an other \$100 off of the chief and ast Dick Harger what was the tip because Dick hangs a round up on Lasalle st. most of the time and he gets the good ones. So he says they was a tip out on crucial steal and maxwell commons and rumley so I says whats the prices of the diffrunt ones and he says I could fine out by looking in the paper.

Well I looked in the paper and finely found where they had the prices wrote down and I seen that rumley was the cheapest and of coarse a man would be a sucker to buy some thing that was 40 arid 50 a peace when you could get a hold of some thing jest as good for 8. Only I thought that the 8 ment 8 cts. a peace and not 8 dollars but when I got up to the brokers office I found out that it was 8 dollars. So I only had a \$100 dollars so I told Dick I couldnt only buy a bout 12 and ½ shares of Rumley so he says I should ought to buy

on margins because that was what evry body was doing so I says how many shares could I get for \$100 on margin and he says I could get 10 shares and then whenever the stock moved up a pt. I would make \$10.

The broker I was talking to a long with Dick was a nice fellow and wanted to know all a bout what kind of famly I had and how I liked Allison and so 4th. and I told him I says I like Allison O.K. but it wont be good enough for me after Ive cleaned you up on this here rumley deal. So he jest laughed and I suppose a broker gets so as he can loose money and laugh right a long but probly where 1 mans beating him out of money hes wining from some sucker so what the diffrents.

Well I left him my \$100 and I and Dick had a few drinks and then I lade a round head quarters till 6 and then I come home. I seen a evning paper on the way and the stock was still at 8 yet but it was yesterday P.M. when I bought it and it wouldent of hardly had time to sore beffore they closed up for the day. I didnt tell Grace nothing a bout it but I will keep it for a big surprise from her and some day when Ive made my pile I will drop a neat little check in her lap.

This rumley is 1 of these here war bribes Charley and its a big factory down in Ind. some wheres and there going to make riffles for the war and of coarse when that gets out in the papers evry body will want some of the stock and thats what makes it go up. Dick says he wouldent be supprised if it went up to \$25 a peace in a few days but you can bet I wont leave go of it at no such figure but will hang on and suppose it done what bethlehem. Steal done Charley and sored up to over \$500 that would make me a bout \$5000 winner. Pretty sweet hay Charley.

But Dick says they aint no real chance of it going up that high and I will be O. K. if it tuches 100 and for me to sell out then and I will be \$920 a head of the broker on the deal. I will hold on a day or 2 even after it gets to 100 and see weather it looks like it would go up some more and I dont see why it shouldent because 100 aint only jest par

and allmost all the war bribes gos way up over par.

The way they work this margin business they aint no chance for me to loose all my money. I seen that right a way and thats the reason I got this here rumley instead of crucial steal or maxwell commons because them 2 stocks is way up a round 40 or 80 and they could drop way down to nothing though of coarse they aint much chance of that but I figured it was better to play safe.

But I was going to tell you a bout how they work the margins. You see a man pays \$100 like I done and that gives him a 10 pt. margin. Then he dont half to worry a bout no more money to put up till the stock falls off 10 pts. Well you can see where I got them nailed Charley because the stock I bought wasent only \$8.00 a peace and it couldnt fall down 10 pts. because they aint room enough. See Charley. I guess the broker must of been thinking a bout some thing else when he left me have it.

Well Charley it looks like my lucks changed at last. Heres hoping old rumley beats bethlehem steals record hay Charley. Regards to Mary.

Your Bro.

F. A. GROSS.

Allison. Ill. Oct. 28.

DEAR Chas. Well Charley old boy this stock markit games got working beat to deth and if things gos on the way they been going Im libel to tell them to take my job and jump in the lake with it and I wont do nothing else only buy and sell.

I told you a bout me geting a hold of 10 shares of rumley stock the other day and I payed \$8.00 a peace for it and now where do you think its at Charley. Up to \$14.00 all ready and that a raze of \$6.00 in 5 days and that means \$6.00 a peace and not \$6.00 all to gather so with me haveing 10 shares that means Im \$60.00 a head of the game. Hows that Charley \$60.00 in 5 days. Thats \$12.00 per day and with out me doing a tap of work. I guess thats better than plane close work hay Charley. Of coarse I havent no idear how high its going. It hasent realy got started yet and I havent saw nothing in the papers a bout the war orders the companys landed and

when that news comes out theyll be a big rush for the stock and it will shoot up like a sky rockit a hole lot more then \$12.00 per day probly. But I like to play safe so suppose we say it dont only go up \$12.00 per day. Well theys 365 days in a yr. and if Id hang on for a yr. that would mean Id be worth pretty clost to \$4500.00 You cant beat that for easy money Charley. I wisht you had some money to spare and you could male it out to me and Id buy some of the stock for you beffore it gets to high up. Id tip Graces old man off only hes got funny idears a bout investing and bessides he would probly tell Grace and I want to keep it for a supprise from her.

If you have got a little money say \$100 that you want to run up in to some thing big send it a long and I will get some body to place it with the broker for you and I wouldnt have the nerve to go in his office again my self because hes probly so sore at me by this time that he would want to fight and of coarse he couldnt get nothing but the worst of it but Im not looking for no trouble. Im makeing money to fast. Bessides he probly would say I was a crook on acct. of me getting in on the ground flr. and would refuse to sell me some more of the stock. But I could get some body else to place it or may be theys an other broker thats got a little of it.

Leave me know right a way Charley. The longer you wait the smaller your prophets would be. O you war bribes.

Your Bro. F. A. GROSS.

Allison. Ill. Oct. 31.

BROTHER CHAS. Well Chas. the newspapers should ought to be forced to not print nothing that would effect the stock markit and this country would be a hole lot better off and no danger of panicks.

Here yesterday they go and print a lot of junk a bout a U.S. boat geting sank by a German boat and it looked like we was going to have strange rellations with the old country. What do you think of that Charley and not a word of truth in the hole story and bessides suppose it had of been true there takeing a chance of runeing a man when they print it. And this A.M. they come out and print that it was a falts report and not true but in the mean wile the stock markit was all shot to peaces and evry thing went down bethlehem Steal and Gen. Moders and crucial Steal and all of them. And rumley went a long with the

rest of them because when I goes the rest gos even if they aint no reason why they should.

I bet I could sew the papers for dam-mages Charley and get a verdict to. But of coarse a man dont want to get in no jam with the papers when you hold a public office.

Well Charley rumleys got to start all over again and I figure it will beggin to go up Mon. A. M. and then keep

on going with out no more foolishness because the people will know enough to not beleive evry thing they see in the papers after this and they should ought to knew it a long wile a go. Instead of being \$60 a head of the broker like I was when it was \$14.00 a peace Im \$20.00 to the bad but of coarse it aint only temperary and I guess the broker would be glad to give me a couple \$100 now to call all bets off. No chance hay Charley.

Best rgds. to Mary.

Your Brother. FRED A. GROSS.

Allison. Ill. Nov. 4.

BRO. CHAS. Well Chas. Im out of the markit temperarly and it wont be long but only till I get a hold of some thing thats really good and not no



The newspapers print a lot of junk a bout a U. S. boat geting sank.

fliver like this here rumley stock. They wasnt really no war bribes a bout it Charley and that story a bout them getting them orders for riffles was a fake jest like the story a bout the boat getting sank.

I was looking for the stock to start going up again last Mon. but I seen a ticker at noon and instead of it going up it went down to \$4. So I went a round that P.M. and seen the broker and if he give me the laugh I was going to bust him but he was O.K. a bout it and come to find out he wasnt gamboling with me his self but jest acting like a go between between I and the man I was buying the stock from in NY.

So I talked with him a wile and I ast him what did he think a bout the stock and I also had a letter from him that I didnt understand what is was a bout so he says the letter was jest the reglar statement that they send out to there patterns evry month and he told me it was costing me so much per mo. for in-trust for owning the stock and also his ferm got a commision for handeling the stock so I says well do you think the stocks going up and he says he never give advise to no body but it didnt look like it could go down much father. So I ast him did he think it was O. K. to hold on to it and he says well he didnt think much of it because the Co. was in the hands of a reciever and wasnt doing no war busness that he knowed any thing a bout.

So I seen where it would be a sucker play to hold on to the stock so I called him up next A. M. and told him to sell. Well Charley I thought I was going to get \$4.00 a peace and wouldent only loose \$40.00 but by the time he got a round to sell it it was down to \$3.00 a peace so I loose \$50.00 bessides a bout \$6.00 extra for commision and so 4th. and the \$2.00 I give Dick Harger for the tip. What do you think of a man takeing \$2.00 for telling you how to loose your money.

Well Charely Im laying low now and wont go in to nothing else till I get a good 1 strate from head quarters and then I will make my \$56.00 back and a hole lot more with it. Anyway it wasnt doing so bad for a man to only loose

\$56.00 the 1st. time I tride the game. Im on to it now and wont make no mistake the next time.

Regards to Mary.

Your brother.

FRED.

Allison, Ill. Nov. 6.

BROTHER CHARLEY. Well Chas.

Im on a live 1 this time and 1 that aint no fliver and the way this 1 has been soreing I will have a neat little prophet probly beffore you get this letter. Its maxwell commons this time Chas. and it looks like it wouldent never stop going up.

This here is the same stock Dick Harger told me a bout it the time I bought the rumley but he didnt know nothing a bout it but was jest guessing but this time I got the tip from a man that knows what hes talking a bout.

This here aint no cheap stock Charley but costs real money and it started out at \$70.00 or some wheres only I didnt get in on it till it was up to \$85.00 and now all ready its up to \$90. I got 10 shares Charley the same like I had of rumley but 10 shares of rumley wasnt only worth \$30 and the stock I got now is worth \$900. Hows that for a dif-frunts Charley.

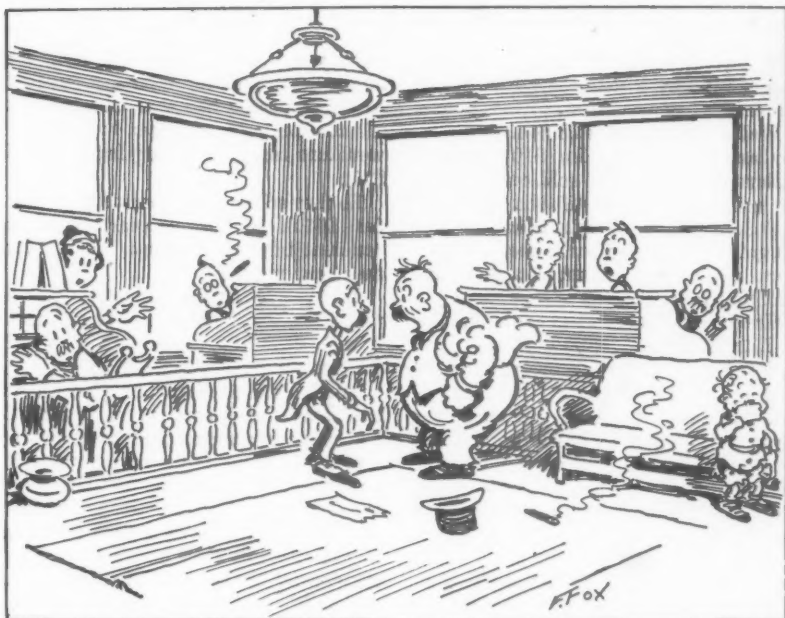
Of coarse I couldnt sell the stock now and get \$900 because I dont own it right out but bought it on margins but Im \$50.00 a head all ready or pretty near even on the other deal and the best part of it is that this here stock would keep right on soreing all the more if all the boats in the US. beggin to start tipping or was sunk because this here is a automobile stock and the lest boats they is to ride in the more people will half to buy automobiles.

The man that give me the tip says he didnt think this here raze would stop short of \$150.00 and that means Im pretty sure to make a prophet of \$650.00 if I hold on. Well Charley I dont half to tell you I will hold on when theys that much money in site.

A man dont hardly feel right playing a cinch game like this but the stock markit took my \$50.00 beffore so I guess I got a lisen to get back at them hay Charley.

Your Bro.

F. A. GROSS.



So I says if your neck wasent so small I'd give you my shirt and he says you better not loose your temper a long with your money.

BRO. CHARLEY. This is a fine skin game Charley and a mans a sucker to mix up with a bunch of crooks like some of these here brokers. There worse then kontraktters that builds a house.

I guess I told you a bout me buying this here maxwell commons at \$85.00 a peace and I had to borry a \$100 more off of the chief to put up for my margins and the stock went clear up to \$92.00 a peace and I could of sold and made \$70.00 but I thought of coarse it would sore up over par and may be way up to \$150.00 so I held on and didnt sell and then all of a sudden they was a story come out in the papers that a U.S. fish was dying of stumach ache or some thing and the hole markit gos down and the maxwell commons gos a long with the rest of them and yesterday she was down to \$74.00 a peace and this here brokers office called me up on the phone and says they would half to have some more money. I says what for and they says for margins so I says you all ready got a \$100 of mine over there and they says thats all ready wiped out so I says dont try no game like that on me or I

will close you up tighter then Sunday.

So then the broker I know over there come to the phone and ast me would I come over and see him so I says yes I would and I went over there and he explained it out for me and says that my \$100.00 was for 10 pts. and now the stock was more than 10 pts. bellow where I bought it at so I would half to come acrost with an other \$100.

So I says supose I dont come acrost and he says well then you loose the \$100 you all ready put up and you owe us \$10.00 bessides not saying nothing a bout commision and intrust so I says if your neck wasent so small Id give you my shirt and he says you better not loose your temper a long with your money.

So then I seen they wasent no use quarling with him so I had to go to the chief and borry an other \$100 and give it to the broker and of coarse Im safe with out no more putting up till the stock gos down to \$65.00 and they aint no chance of that.

But its a fine game Charley where they can come a round and tap you when

ever they feel like it and you loose a couple \$100 evry time theys a american fish catched or took sick. -

Well Charley shes still \$74.00 yet to-day and that means Im \$100 and 10 dollars out that is if I sold out now but Im going to hang on till she gets back to \$85.00 where I bought it at and then Im going to sell and brake even and you wont never hear no more a bout me dubbling in stocks.

Grace was down in the basemunt this A. M. when I was fixing the furnice fire and she noticed how short we was on coal and all as we got left is a bout $\frac{1}{2}$ a ton left over from last winter so she says you will half to hussle up and buy some more coal. I says yes I was going to order some and she says she would order it for me if I was in a hurry so I had to tell her to not bother a bout it because I thought I could get a better price if I ordered it my self. Fine chance we got of getting any coal hay Charley. They could be dead american fish all over the sts. of Germany with out the price of coal dropping and you cant buy it on no margins nether. I hope wear invited out a hole lot this winter so as we can get warm onct in a wile.

Rgds. to Mary.

Your Bro.

F. A. GROSS.

Allison, Ill. Nov. 15.

BRO. CHARLEY. Jest a short note Charley to tell you that Im threw with this stock markit game and they can take there war bribes and the rest of there stocks and build a bond fire with them only of coarse they would half to have bonds and not stocks for a bond fire. You see I can still joke yet and make others smile though I dont see nothing to smile a bout my self.

Well Charley the maxwell commons cost me just a bout \$200. Instead of them going up they dropped to \$67.00 and the broker called me on the phone again and says he would half to see an other \$100. So I says if you can see an other \$100 on me its time you consulted a octopus.

So he says what do you mean so I says I havent got no \$100 and cant get no \$100 so he says do you want us to sell you out so I says I dont care

what you do so he says all right and hung up the phone. What do you think of a cheap stiff like that Charley after all the business Id gave him and he wouldnt carry me a long for a measely \$100.

So they sold out my maxwell commons for \$67.00 dollars a peace and you couldnt buy supper for a flee on what they sent me back.

Im threw Charley and the next man that gives me a tip on the stock markit I will tip them hay Charley. I will tip them over on there ear.

Well Charley theys no coal in the basemunt and I owe the chief \$200.00 and xmas is comeing and the 1 of Jan. they will be an other payment on the propty includeing intrust and Grace says her and the kids has all got to have new close. god knows I need new close to Charley but they aint no chance of me getting them unlest the chief sends me back to travvleing beat and gives me a uniform. Dont look for nothing from us this xmas Charley unlest its a invatation to my funaral.

Grace got a letter from her old man and hes comeing down from Milwaukee to spend a wk. with us. Thats a bout all as he will spend is a wk.

Rgds. to Mary.

Your brother.

F. A. GROSS.

Allison, Ill. Nov. 20.

DEAR Bro. Charley. Well Charley I got some goods news for you this time and I guess you get a xmas present from us after all you and Mary both. I bet you'll be suprised when you hear what I got to tell you and you can bet I was suprised when it come off.

I told you I guess that Graces old man was comeing to vissit us. Well he come last night and wile we was seting at the supper table he sprung it. 1st. he says he realized that he hadent gave Grace enough for her berth day thats in Sept. and then he says he was waiting till he had some thing to give her that was worth giveing so then he reached down in his pocket and halled out a check and give it to Grace. Well I thought it was probly a \$100.00 and she could get her self and the kids some close and may be have enough left over

for a ton of coal but when Grace seen the check she screemed like she was shot and I run over to catch a hold of her beffore she fell out of her chair. The check was right where I could see it when I got over there and it was \$3000. There Charley hows that for a supprise.

But that aint all of it. After we had both of us huged and kissed the old man Grace ast him if he was sure he could spare that much money and I wouldnt never of ast him that because it was takeing chances but he just laughed and says he guest he could aford it because he had cleaned up \$30000. Then Grace ast him did he sell his propty in Milwaukee and so 4th. and he says No but I been corting the war bribes.

So Grace ast him what did he mean and he give us the story. He made \$5000 buying crucial Steal and sold it when it was up. But how he got the other \$25000 was the funny part. He went in a brokers office when bethlehem Steal was \$550 a peace and he had a hunch that it was going to drop and he pertended like he had 500 shares when he didnt really have a nichols worth. And he had to slip the broker \$10000 temperarly to act it out with him and him and the broker wired to a broker in Chi and says they wanted to sell 500 shares of bethlehem Steal and mind you Charley they didnt have none of it. But they were up to Milwaukee and the other broker was here in Chi so he couldnt tell if they had it or didnt have it. So he sold it some wheres at \$550 a peace and in less then a wk. the price dropped down to \$500 a peace and then what does the old man do but buy 500 shares at \$500 and then he delivers it to the guy that bought it off of him at \$550 when he didnt have it.

You half to slip it to the old man to think of a thing like that and have the nerve to pull it.

I allways knowed he was there with the noodle and Im certunly glad to see him get the money because hes allways treated us grate.

But I wisht I knowed beffore that you could buy some thing with out haveing it and then sell it when you can get it cheap. Thats the best game of all Charley a specially when they dont no body know a bout it accept Graces old man and the broker up to Milwaukee and our selfs. Why you couldnt help beating that game Charley and what I have left after my dedts is payed and the coal boughten and so 4th. Im going to take it to some broker and let him in on the secret and I and him will get rich to gather.

Wait till maxwell commons gets up to \$85 again and watch me sell it and pertend like Ive got some to sell. And I will do the same thing with rumley the next time she hits \$14. Thats the way to trim them Charley and no chance of loss because suppose you sold some rumley at \$14 and then instead of going down she went up to \$20 and stayed there you could jest say you thought you had some to sell but you cant fine it no wheres and it must of been stole. Grate chance theyve got to beat a man thats playing the game that way. O you war bribes. Hay Charley.

Rgds. to Mary.

Your Bro. F. A. Gross.



Both of us huged and kissed the old man.

In Line with
THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE'S
Policy of presenting the work
of the Greatest Writers
Announcement is now
Made that
COSMO HAMILTON
Author of "The Blindness of
Virtue" and other noted books
and dramas, has been added to
its list of famous contributors



His new novel "The Sins
of the Children" will
begin in an early issue

EVERY MARRIED PERSON knows that quarrels can grow like snow-
balls rolling downhill.

remembered this, on
dinner given by the
might not have

If Laura Sterne had only
the evening of the
Channings, this story
been written.



Whose

Fault?

By Thomas Addison

THE weakest point in
a man's armor is his
vanity. He may cut
and thrust right valiantly at
his besetting sins, and slay them; but
woe is he when the fine edge of flattery
finds the joints of his harness.

Thus was Clement Sterne laid low—
forty-five, architect and in the full flood
of his powers; a well-composed, per-
sonable man who had met success and
held to it.

It began at the Ellery Channings'
dinner. Sterne had taken in a fat, com-
fortable little woman who asked only
to be allowed to discuss her guinea squab
in gustatory abandon. This left him
free to let his thoughts wander as they
would, and presently they came to a
pleasurable pause with Mrs. Daphne
Payne, directly opposite.

She was a widow, years younger
than Sterne,—nine of them, to be
exact,—and her bereavement had
passed into the anniversary stage
where proximo may be considered with
all due deference to ultimo. She was
lithe, full-lipped and languorous, very
fair, and with baffling brown eyes, sun-
shot as aventurin crystals. A desirable
woman, as one's taste might run.

ILLUSTRATED
BY R. F. JAMES

She raised her eyes to
Sterne's as they rested on her,
let them fall, and raised and
let them fall again. It was an artifice
old as Eve, and Sterne interpreted
it as simple Adam doubtless did—a
timid challenge to adventures in com-
panionship. Unconsciously his shoulders
squared and his head lifted. Fifteen
years of prosy married life bridles a
man's fancy for himself to a sober jog
trot, and when the spur of a sudden and
extrinsic interest in his masculine charms
is applied it is apt to set him off at a
gallop.

And so Sterne, all at once, found him-
self in excellent case. He was not a
wit; he was, in fact, accounted slow
in company; yet now, in response to a
sally from his host, he countered with
a nimble shaft that brought him a wave
of applause from around the table. Mrs.
Payne laughed low, and a shade the
longest, so that the clear ripple of her
voice for a second's beat fell alone on
Sterne's pleased ear. And again the elu-
sive, brown eyes invited him. His gaze
persisted this time, and was rewarded
finally with an altogether new look—
steady, searching, serious—before which
his own eyes fell. A curious headiness

assailed him; it was as if his wine for the moment had got the better of him.

Higher up the board, and on the same side with him, Sterne's wife was placed. Had it been the other side, the catastrophe on which this tale is built might have been delayed; might, indeed, have never been—so slight a twist of circumstance does Fate employ to work her will. But Laura Sterne caught the look this other woman gave her husband and, reading deeper than man may do, knew what it boded. Clement was as steady-going as an old family horse. Laura had no fear that he would venture of himself on forbidden ground; but were a deft hand stretched out to lead him—? It was an experiment she had no wish to witness. Her narrow mouth took on set lines, and her light eyes grew coldly watchful. She was older than the Payne woman, and to that degree more formidable. It is your old watchdog that fights the most fiercely for his bone.

II

ON the way home Sterne was extravagantly talkative, for him. The dinner was splendidly chosen, Channing the best of good old sports, the company excellently matched, the talk full of "pep." It was, in short, an event.

Laura let him run on, waiting to see if he would bring in Daphne Payne. He did not, though he laughed good-naturedly at his fat little table-mate and skimmed about in his remarks among the company in general.

"And, by Jove, Lolly," he wound up buoyantly, "you were the best dressed, best looking girl of the bunch. A regular man-killer!"

It was in this way Sterne salved a twinge of conscience. Laura understood; and had she been a wise woman, had she known the uses of diplomacy, she would have edged over to his corner of the limousine and kissed him; would have given back the compliment with the added sauce of endearment to tickle his man's good regard for himself. Especially would she have done so on this especial evening. But she was of a

self-centered nature; her desires were concentric, winding in upon herself. This had its natural expression in a large intolerance for the things that did not run with her own bent. And, further, years of placid possession had brought to her a sense of security in her wedded estate which did not seem to call for ebullient manifestations of pride in it. It was an actuality—an institution—and to be taken for granted, as she took the breakfast kiss of greeting with which Sterne unfailingly began his day: one does not grow ecstatic over an established order of things.

And with his compliments the same. Sterne was not chary of them. From the outset he had played the gallant to her—it was in the man's nature to pinnacle his womankind—and she had come to accept his chants of praise as a natural obligation of the marital compact he had entered into. She completely overlooked the element of reciprocity inherent in all fair working contracts. And to-night her self-complacency was ruffled. In other words, her bone was threatened; and though she felt perfectly competent to defend it, the thought that anyone would dare to contend for it roused fighting instincts. So she said, with a hint of acrimony threading her voice:

"I am forty years old, Clement. Don't be foolish." And she added: "I saw you talking with Daphne Payne after dinner. What did she have to say?"

"Oh, nothing very much. The usual thing at first meetings—weather, shows, mutual friends, and all that."

Sterne strove to make the statement casual. His talk with Mrs. Payne had really gone no further than the topics cited; yet in some way an air of intimacy had pervaded it that intrigued him. There was not a thought of harm in him; he had mildly flirted with a very pretty woman, that was all; yet he was aware of a singular sense of mental reservation toward his wife that was confusingly new to him. It told in his voice. He felt that it did, and it heightened his constraint. After a pause Laura spoke again.

"I shall always believe it was suicide. Many people do."

"I don't quite get the connection," said Sterne. "Whose suicide?"

"George Payne's. They said he was cleaning the pistol; but what man starts at such a thing after twelve at night? It is incredible!"

"Oh, that old rumor?" Sterne scoffed at it. "All bosh, Lolly. Payne was solvent and thoroughly alive—the picture of health. He had no worries. It was threshed out in the papers at the time."

"The papers were hushed up; the family saw to that," asserted Laura obstinately. "Those who know say George Payne was driven to it by his wife. There was another man."

"Laura!" Sterne's tone was sharp. "You are not fair. Grace Channing doesn't have to peddle her dinner invitations. She can pick and choose. The fact that Mrs. Payne was asked to-night—"

Laura broke in on him.

"My dear Clement, you are positively childish in some things! It simply proves there was no open scandal. One does not become socially impossible until one's sins are published. Until then—"

"God help us!" interrupted Sterne on his part. "Anyone is privileged to stick a knife in our backs."

Then he made a man's mistake. "I don't believe a word of all that rot," he declared.

Laura was silent for perhaps half a minute, after which she put a question to him; a single word, yet bothersome in his intricate state of mind.

"Why?" she asked with ominous quiet.

"Why? Why—hang it, Lolly—it's cowardly, that's why!" he floundered. "It isn't fair—to whisper away a woman's reputation. There's no come-back for her. And"—a worse mistake—"she



Laura understood, and had she been a wise woman, had she known the uses of diplomacy, she would have edged over to his corner of the limousine and kissed him; would have given back the compliment with the added sauce of endearment to tickle his man's good regard for himself.

doesn't strike me as that sort of person."

"Yes?" Laura was scornfully interested. "But she has a way with men, I'm told, that is entangling. I presume she practiced it with you—and successfully, if your appearance was a test."

Sterne made a movement of annoyance.

"Oh, come now, Lolly," he protested. "You are going a bit too far, really. We've had enough of Mrs. Payne, don't you think? She has her own way to go, and we have ours; and they don't run side by side. Here's the house."

III

ANOTHER woman would, perhaps, have let the matter rest there, outside the house, where were a multitude of things as easily let alone. Sterne felt that he had somehow cleared his skirts with his last remark, and, what is more, his attitude was sincere. He had been rather taken with Daphne Payne for the moment; he had experienced a boyish elation that he, an old sober-sided married man, had been looked upon with favor by an unattached young woman; but the spell was passed. It was an episode, nothing more. Left to himself he would forget it or, at the most, recall it with a charitable smile in those odd times when memory stirs idly amid the trivialities of other days.

But Laura was of the type of woman who must turn her little bag of troubles inside out to determine that none has escaped. However slight, she did not consider a trouble as ready to be laid aside until she had dwelt upon it to exhaustion. Which is the one perfect way to breed trouble.

Sterne was making ready for bed when she came into his room, and sat down with the air of "having it out." He recognized it, though hitherto it had been the delinquencies of servants, tradesmen, friends and foes that seasoned these star chamber inquiries. An unpleasant feeling that it was he now who was to be tried, stiffened his spine.

"Get it out of your system, Laura," he adjured her. "What is it?"

"I do not want you to cultivate Daphne Payne's acquaintance," she began.

"I haven't the intention of doing so," he replied, a little shortly. "What else?"

Laura digested this. Then she said:

"I saw her making eyes at you across the table."

"Nonsense!" Sterne, however, felt the blood rise in his face. Laura noted it.

"You must have encouraged her," she persisted. "A woman doesn't look at a man—like that—unless she has reason to believe—"

"Laura! This is the veriest imbecility. It affronts me." Sterne kicked off a shoe with vehemence.

"Didn't you?" she challenged.

"In heaven's name, didn't I what?"

"Encourage her?"

Sterne kicked off the other shoe and stood up.

"I haven't the faintest idea of what you mean!" he exclaimed. "We did not exchange a word across the table. How could I 'encourage her,' as you put it?"

"Didn't you look at her?"

"Am I bereft of sight?" demanded Sterne impatiently. "I looked at all the women, and her among them. Yes, I looked at her. Why not? She doesn't offend one's eyes, I take it."

He went to the dresser and fumbled in the litter on it for a cigarette.

"I thought so," said Laura bitingly. "And afterwards you found a convenient corner where you could talk—a natural sequence."

It was an accusation, as she phrased it. Jealousy was quickening in her, egging her on to say things that would hurt: Clement was defending himself, and the woman.

"A natural sequence," she iterated, Sterne making the attentive lighting of his cigarette an excuse for silence. "I can't imagine what you can see in her to engage you so!"

Sterne returned to his chair. He exhaled slowly a long film of smoke, and said:

"Do you find this sort of thing agreeable, Lolly? Candidly, I don't. Let us make an end of it. We have been married fifteen years. I am absorbed in my work, and in you. Nothing else

counts." He smiled placatingly. "And I'm horribly sleepy, dear girl."

This to Laura was a distinct evasion of the issue. Clement had flirted with Daphne Payne. She wanted him to lie down and roll over and beg forgiveness; though, doubtless, from the very act she would have suspected there were dark admissions to be drawn from him should she use the probe.

"I hope," she remarked in a tone which, however, was not hopeful, "that it is the end of it. Daphne Payne is a perfectly lawless creature. And she doesn't look at a man as she looked at you to-night, Clement, unless she has designs on him. I am simply cautioning you. I could stand anything but a vulgar intrigue with such a woman."

"You might have omitted that, Laura," he suggested coldly. But she went on.

"Clement, I want you to promise me you will have nothing to do with her."

Had there been in all this one tender note in Laura's voice Sterne would have melted to it. But there was not—only a sustained grievance. He regarded her intently. There was a gleam in his eye that should have warned her. She was attacking him from the wrong side.

"You mean," he said at length, "that I am to cut Mrs. Payne—for no reason whatever?"

"I have given you the reason."

"It is not a valid one."

"You refuse to promise?"

"In the way you put it—yes."

They were both standing now, a barrier of antagonism reared between them; he smarting under the anomalous position in which she had placed him; she baffled, suspicious, her jealousy aflame.

"I was not mistaken!" she flared at him. "You did encourage her. There is an understanding—already! Oh, but it was quick work!"

Sterne carefully laid aside his half-consumed cigarette. He crossed to the door, opened it and bowed gravely.

"May I be permitted to wish you good night?" he begged.

Laura hesitated. This was an unlooked-for end to the interview, abrupt to disconcertion. Her husband was presented in a light new to her experience of him. Then her head lifted, and,

wordless, she passed from his room into hers. A sudden revulsion of feeling swept through the man.

"Lolly!" he called after. "Lolly! I—I am sorry!"

She did not pause or look back, and he closed the door.

IV

STERNE put down the telephone and stared out of the window. Mrs. Daphne Payne had called him. It was a business talk; strictly that, he told himself. She was thinking of building a bungalow over on the Island, and could she consult with him about the plans? The proceeding, to this point, was wholly in order. Mrs. Payne had money. She was a desirable client. There was no sensible reason why his professional services should not be placed at her disposal. The divergence lay in his acceptance of her invitation to drop in that afternoon and discuss the matter over a cup of tea. His business had outgrown that sort of thing. People came to him, at his office. Why, then, had he accepted? The answer was, he argued, that he had obeyed an impulse, such as might catch the coolest headed man off his guard. He was surprised into it.

A week had passed since the Ellery Channings' dinner. Laura, having taken counsel with herself in the watches of that night, decided to punish her husband with a chill reserve of manner. It would, she deemed, convict him of his sin and bring him to repentance.

With some men this domestic equivalent of solitary confinement might have prevailed. But not so with Sterne. It hardened him. He met reserve with reserve until the daily breakfast table was become for them an icy expanse for the passage only of required formalities. At night came relief, for they dined out a great deal, and not always together. So far they had not, either of them, been thrown with Daphne Payne again. Yet, being the cause of this estrangement, she was constantly in the mind of each. This, in Sterne's case, was exactly what his wife had thought to fight against; and had he been wholly honest with himself,

it was the mainspring of his motive in accepting Daphne's invitation to tea—he was curious to study her at close range, to judge for himself if she really was as dangerous as Laura had pictured her. He did not believe it; he wanted to see.

So he kept his appointment, and called. He stayed above an hour, and there was an odd light in his eyes when he took his leave. Laura had maligned Mrs. Payne. She was a bright, companionable woman, and a very lonely and misunderstood one. The last was transparently obvious, and it was this that made her reach out to a kindred spirit in whom she could be sure of understanding and sympathetic accord. Certainly there was no guile in this! And she knew how to appreciate a man for his personal worth. She had shown this in a dozen little ways, none of which he could recall definitely, but all of which combined left an impression that lingered. He was not displeased that he was to call again. The bungalow had been only cursorily considered at this meeting; they had seemed to drift away from it to other things, and had returned to it with a laugh for their remissness only when it was time for him to go. It made another consultation necessary.

Sterne stepped out into the street raised mightily in his own esteem. With this was a feeling of resentment at Laura's unjust arraignment of a defenseless woman and devoted mother. For her child, a frail little thing, had been brought in for him to see, and Mrs. Payne's tender pride in her had touched Sterne.

Coincidence is a strange factor in our lives; it shapes them to an extent we are not inclined to credit. As it chanced,—or was decreed,—when Sterne issued from Mrs. Payne's house, Laura was passing in her car. She had been making a call in the neighborhood. They caught sight of each other at the same instant. Laura's face blanched. She knew the Payne residence; it was marked with red on her mental chart—a danger spot. Sterne made her a signal, but she gave him a frozen look and went on.

Sterne walked a few blocks and turned

in at his club. Here he sat for a long time brooding behind a newspaper. He was not naturally a deceitful man, or secretive. He had honestly intended telling Laura of his visit to Daphne Payne. It was her due, and he had no desire to withhold it, though he knew it would bring a storm about his head. But now the matter had taken on a different complexion. Laura would consider that she had uncovered him, had caught him *in flagrante delicto*. Explanations would be difficult.

Finally he went home and dressed for dinner. They had no engagement for the night; it was to be a session with themselves. He smiled rather grimly at the thought. When he had changed he knocked at Laura's door. He received no response, and he knocked again. This time the door was flung back and Laura faced him on the threshold. She was in undress, and the room, he saw, was in confusion. A trunk stood open in the middle of the floor, and a maid was bending over it. Sterne spoke to the girl, and she went out. Laura did not speak. Her pose was of the angel's with the flaming sword, implacable as doom.

"You are not dining to-night?" observed Sterne.

"I am going away." Her tone was crisp and hard.

"In that case," Sterne replied, "with your permission I will come in. I have something to say to you."

"It is an unnecessary trouble. I saw. It is enough."

She did not yield her position. Sterne flushed darkly. Anger was mounting in him.

"Nevertheless I shall say it," he returned, "and you shall listen. I am coming in."

She gave way at this, a little daunted by his manner, and he strode into the room. He motioned her to a seat and closed the door. Then, succinctly, accurately in part, he explained to her how it happened he was calling on Mrs. Payne. He omitted mention of the tea; it was an incident of no importance, and likely to cloud the issue. And he forbore to state his conclusions concerning the lady; they were not pertinent to the moment. He had called on Mrs. Payne

at her request, on business. It meant dollars to him; and it was in open day. There was nothing to conceal. She—Laura—would have learned it from him at dinner, as a matter of course, had she not prematurely forced him into this ridiculous attitude of confession.

Sterne, warming with his words, shot this last out savagely. It was so monstrously absurd—the whole thing, from the beginning—that he could find no patience for it.

Laura had listened to him with a scornful calm. She was not a woman given to tears—which have their uses, judiciously employed—and she was too self-centered to dispute her judgments with herself. Now she said stonily:

"I had believed your office was reserved for business consultations. It appears I was mistaken."

"You are not," asseverated Sterne. "I simply gave way to an impulse. I can't explain it. It was—"

Laura stopped him with a raised hand.

"Don't! You have said enough. May I be allowed now to proceed undisturbed with my packing?"

Sterne, exasperated, whipped by her chill injustice, cried out passionately.

"Laura! You are making a mountain out of nothing. This past week has been a nightmare. You have treated me like a convicted criminal. Don't carry it too far; I am on a razor edge. What are you planning to do?"

"I am going to my cousin's in Chicago. I do not care to stay here and be shamed to my face. I know exactly what this affinity affair of yours is coming to. I—"

"Oh, good Lord!" exploded Sterne. "Laura, have you gone quite mad?"

"I know the woman," finished Laura, as though he had not spoken, "and I warned you against her. Yet you have deliberately walked into the trap. There is nothing left for me to do but go."

"You misjudge her!" countered Sterne hotly, thereby making his crowning mistake. "I am not a fool. I know the good from the bad."

Laura rose stiffly.

"At least you can spare me your praises of her, Clement. That much I have a right to ask."

Sterne choked back a wrathful word.

"You willfully misunderstand me, Laura," he said, striving for an even voice. "You place me in a false position—you have done so from the first—and judge me from it. I am convicted, sentenced and, by heaven, executed without appeal! I wouldn't go on with this, if I were you."

"Is that a threat?" Laura's eyes flashed.

"It is advice," he stated curtly. "I resent this preposterous position you have placed me in."

"You forget mine," she retorted. "You have not thought of me in this at all. My wish is nothing to you. This other woman is supreme. Were it not so you would promise to keep away from her. Only on that condition will I remain."

Here was the impasse, militantly presented. With equal militancy Sterne faced it. He was dangerously calm. He spoke slowly:

"You have gone about this thing in the wrong way, Laura. I am not a child, to be coerced or driven. I have said to you that Mrs. Daphne Payne is nothing to me. You have refused to believe it. Even so, had you appealed to my love—had you placed it on no other ground but that—I would have promised, no matter how unfair to myself it would have been. But you have not done this. You have tried violently to impose your will on me without cause or reason. I decline to submit to it. And as a final word, remember: this quarrel is of your own seeking. It rests with you to mend it. I will meet you halfway; but the first step must come from you."

He waited. Laura made him no reply; she turned studiously to her packing. Then he went out.

In the morning she was gone. That night Sterne took dinner at his club. He drank freely of his wine and, later, called up Daphne Payne. He was in a bitter spirit, at odds with himself and the world. Mrs. Payne was at home; her voice came to him soft with sympathy and understanding. He went around there, and it was late when he came away. He was in a whirl of strong emotions—for at parting they had kissed.

V

ONCE started, Sterne went to the devil whip and spur. It is a strange trait of the man who up to middle age has led an exemplary life. Reason, prudence, restraint—all desert him. History proves this, through the yesterdays down the yesteryears.

Laura was made acquainted, by kind friends, with Sterne's infatuation for Daphne Payne. Whatever pangs she suffered were ameliorated by a virtuous self-justification in the course she had taken. Events had proved she was right. Sterne wrote to her entreating a divorce. She replied in six words: "I do not believe in divorce." Thenceforth, silence on either side.

Things went on for the better part of a year. It was Daphne Payne who closed the chapter. Her little girl was stricken with appendicitis and hurried to the hospital. For a week her state was doubtful; then the crisis; afterward, slow convalescence.

Sterne called at the hospital when the crisis was passed. Daphne met him at the door of her room, but did not ask him in. She was pale with her vigils, and there was a subtle aloofness in her manner that smote Sterne keenly. He was an outsider, an interloper. There was no place for him in this closeted communion of mother and child.

He pondered it over his Scotch at the club—he had long since taken to whisky—and it worried him.

In a day or two he called again at the hospital. His reception was the same, marked, if anything, by a greater detachment. Daphne's face—its expression—was, it seemed to him, washed of the frailties of the flesh. There was something high in it which abashed him. She had in some way undergone a transformation that left her strange to him. Thereafter he ceased his calls; he would possess his soul in patience until her return home. It would be different then, he told himself. And he resorted to his bottle for comfort.



The door was pushed open laboredly. A little white-robed, powerlessly down to his sides. He stood only by the gasping sobs

It was a bleak, lowering winter night when Sterne found himself once more in the familiar sitting-room. He was made to wait. There was no call to him from the door beyond, as of old.

She came in finally, very quietly, and with a pause to push the door to softly behind her. An absent smile lingered on her lips.

"Dora is sleeping," she said.



wide-eyed, frightened child clung to the knob peering in at them. Sterne's hands slipped irresolute, uncertain, swaying on his feet. The silence was broken of the woman shriveled against the wall.

Daphne was in black, a street dress, close-fitting and severe. A chill struck in on Sterne. Yet he advanced toward her with his purpose plainly speaking in his eyes. She made him a gesture of negation, standing erect and still. It checked him. His arms fell.

"Something has come between us," he complained. "I have felt it all these weeks. What is it, Daphne?"

"I hope to make you understand," she answered. "Sit down, Clem, please."

"Go on," he urged, when they were seated. "You are changed. What has done it?"

"Dora—her illness. Clem, I can't go on."

She brought her hands together in a movement of entreaty. He stared at her, for to a degree he was in liquor and dulled to quick perception.

"What has Dora's illness to do with it?" he demanded. "That is over with. She is well. I don't seem to understand."

"It made me think, Clem. There was an hour when but a breath—oh, so pitifully small!—held her to me; when I could feel the shadows closing in around; when my heart was dying—and on my knees I passed through

the fires that cleanse. . . . Oh, Clem, try to understand!"

Sterne, groping confusedly for her meaning, dimly aware of it, yet, as it touched himself, refusing to entertain it, remained silent.

"Is it not clear to you, Clem?" she pleaded. "I cannot go on after that. I feel—oh, you must understand!—that I—I am purified."

Sterne sat motionless, his eyes fixed on her. Presently he drew a long breath—and laughed. It was not loud, rather as from one who in a theater laughs secretly at some gaucherie of his neighbor. But the tone was different.

"It is not for you," he apologized. "It is for myself. It seems that I have squandered with both hands, and am beggared."

"Clem!"

He went on, chuckling harshly.

"That bungalow. We have forgotten that. It is still in the air. An excellent ruse, Daphne—and it worked! Can you, by any chance, put me back to that fine day?"

"If I only could!"

"That is it. 'If.' The littlest word we know—and the bitterest. Well, you can't put me back. I am here. You say this is the end. It is easily said; but what, pray, is to become of me?"

"You must forget, Clem. We must both forget. It is the only way."

He laughed again.

"Forget? Why surely that is readily managed. I have no home; my friends have dropped away; my business has gone bad; my future is a blank—why, yet, I must forget. It is, as you say, the only thing to do."

He got up and went over to a stand in the corner. On it was a decanter of brandy, placed there by himself in days gone by, and kept replenished at his pleasure. It had been overlooked in Daphne's program for the evening.

"Clem! Don't!" she implored. "Not that—to-night—please!"

"To-night of all

nights," was his reply, thrown at her over his shoulder.

He drank. Once, and again, and yet again he drained the pony glass—greedily, scarce taking breath. He was impatient of the tomtit measure. He turned and smiled at her; and she shrank under it, the remove was so little from a leer.

"It is your good woman," he observed, with a curious contemplative air, "your self-satisfied, chastened, puritanic, bigoted, incorruptible female, who hounds a man to the jumping-off place, and gives him the final push which sends him sprawling overboard; the woman with her own little set of ten command-

ments, to break any one of which means hell. You are not that kind, Daphne. Not you! You have no commandments of your own, and the original Ten do not exist for you. What you covet you take, and when wearied of it, cast aside. A convenient disposition of moral garbage. By Jupiter, you are to be envied, dear one!"

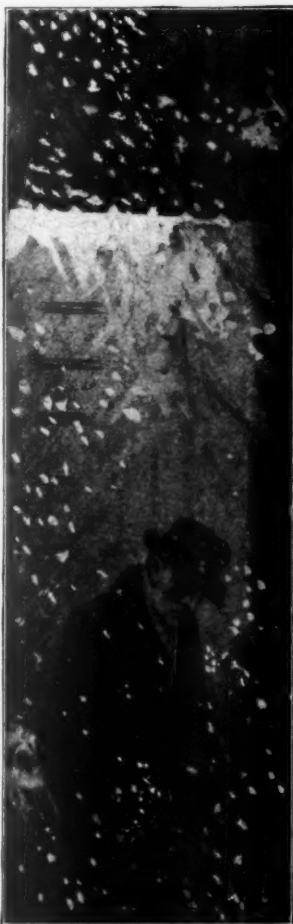
He reached for the brandy and poured himself another glass, and another. The woman cried out in an agony of fear and contrition.

"Clem! I ask forgiveness. In Dora's name, I ask it. Help me, Clem. I need your strength with mine."

He left the table and came over to where she sat, his face emurpled now with drink.

"How can I give you what you have taken from me?" he propounded. "I am shorn and bound. Your hands have done it."

"I know, I know! I am a wicked woman. I lured you on. I planned it. Yet, Clem, I have loved you. I love you



now. Only—oh, Clem, I can't go on; I can't! That night—Dora—it all came home to me. I suffered—I went down into the dust—I prayed!"

"A specific that eludes me," interjected Sterne mockingly. "Well?"

"Oh! you make it hard for me!" she moaned.

"Include me, if you please," he begged.

"I do include you. I know what you must think; but, Clem, it is for Dora. I want my chance—for her sake. I am trying to bring you to understand that. If I had lost her I would have killed myself. And now—now that she has been given back to me—I must prove worthy of the gift. We are going away somewhere—to begin again, Clem—for Dora's sake—my little innocent girl!"

It left Sterne unresponsive. The fresh fuel he had added to the alcoholic fires kindled in him through the day blunted his finer sense and left him with perception only for his own wrongs.

"Why that," he said, "is a wondrous resolution, Daphne. The pity is it comes so late. It leaves me out. What if I object to it? What of that?"

"You will not. You are a man—"

"I was," he corrected. "Let us, above all things, be truthful. And so, why don't you tell me in plain words, Daphne, that you are tired of me? It comes to that, if we leave the hysterics out."

She rose slowly from her chair. Her fair skin went gray in color. Her dark eyes were smoldering fires.

"You are brutal, Clem!" she accused.

"I am your handiwork," he rejoined. "Men whisper it when I pass." He drew away an unsteady step, and looked her up and down. "A rag, a bone and a hank of hair." The man was right—it comes to just that: 'A rag, a bone and a hank of hair!' I sold my all for that—and I lose even it!"

He put back his head, and laughed. A sound came from the next room—a child's querulous cry. The woman laid a compelling hand on Sterne's arm.

"Dora! You have awakened her. She will be running in. You must go. And you must not come again. To-morrow, when you think it over—"

He struck her hand down, and she cowered from him to the wall. A black rage took hold on him. His breath came hissingly.

"To-morrow! And the next day, and the next, and next—oh, you may be sure I'll think of it!" He closed up on her. "But now—here—we will finish this. You say you have loved me. It is a lie. Love? You have never known it—not for any mortal being—or the memory would have kept you pure. Your child could not. Your womanhood could not. Your soul's peace could not. You are rotten to the core—as I am. A destroyer of homes—as I am—"

"Go! Go!" she cried. "I can't bear any more!"

Again she put forth her hand, urging him from her. This time he seized it, crumpling it in his own.

"Once it was 'Come,'" he sneered. "'Come, beloved; the hours drag without you.' Your arms ached for me. And now—it is 'Go! Go!' You are sated, cloyed, weary. You have destroyed me, but you—you!—you want 'your chance!' At what? Still another man? Another poor devil to feed on—bleed his soul—blister it with a kiss? Tell me! And speak truth, or as hell lives I will choke it from you!"

His hands leaped to her throat and trembled clutchingly there.

"I—have—told—you," she panted. "It is—the truth. I cannot add to it—only say—I am sorry—I repent. Clem! Forgive! Forgive!"

The door was pushed open laboredly. A little white-robed, wide-eyed, frightened child clung to the knob peering in at them. Sterne's hands slipped powerlessly down to his sides. He stood irresolute, uncertain, swaying on his feet. The silence was broken only by the gasping sobs of the woman shriveled against the wall. At last he spoke, hoarsely.

"Well—have it so," he said. "It is over."

He stumbled from the room and the house. Outside, snow was falling. He looked up at the feathery flakes a long minute.

"'As white as snow,'" he muttered, as he shambled on. "I wonder!"

The night swallowed him up.



The
Previous
Chapters
of "The
Grizzly"

JAMES OLIVER CUNNINGHAM writes, in this novel of the North, of a new kind of hero, a plain, powerful, monstrous grizzly bear.

Thor is overlord of a stretch of the high Canadian Rockies. One lovely June day he comes, like some feudal lord of old, down into the valleys to plunder. Eating is his sole business of the summer—so that he may lay up a store of fat to last through his long winter sleep. He

digs up his favorite tidbit, a gopher, for his heavy course and steals a heap of ground-nuts from a rock rabbit for his dessert. He is happy and content. Other bears roam his mountains, as do big-horn sheep and lesser animals. He lives and lets live. He fights only when his rights are disputed and kills only when he wants food. His philosophy of life could be summed up in three words, "Let me alone."

Then suddenly, out of the south comes destruction to the harmony of his days.

JIM LANGDON, a writer, is exploring. He has with him Bruce Otto, a mountaineer, and a pack-train with a camping outfit. They enter one of Thor's valleys and take a look around with their field-glasses.

"I see three caribou up the valley," says Otto.

"I see a big-horn looking down from the peak of that first mountain to the right," comments Langdon.

"And I see a grizzly as big as a house just beyond the ravine over there," says Otto again.

Langdon turns his glass to follow Otto's. "Gee, he's the biggest grizzly in the Rockies," he cries. "We'll camp here till we get him if it takes all summer."

Langdon climbs the slope toward Thor without the great fellow's getting scent of him. Suddenly Langdon looks up. A monster bulk of head and shoulder looms over him.

So Thor sees his first man. He is not afraid and he is not angry. His great lungs fill with the hot smell of man. He turns away in disgust, and speeds with a

ball-like motion. Langdon shoots. Otto joins him. All at once there is a hot pain in Thor's shoulder. He turns and roars defiance. Another whirl of fire sears his gigantic back, and he breaks for a divide over which he plunges out of rifle-shot.

The great beast's hurts are more painful than serious. The bone has not been touched. So he makes for a ravine and his doctor, a clay wallow. He plunges in and turns his torn shoulder to the cooling mud till the wound is closed. He spends half the night in the clay bath and then toils up the ravine.

Langdon is the more determined to get Thor now. The next morning, after a breakfast of warm bannock and broiled sheep steaks, he and Otto set out to find him. They come to his tracks in the mud. Langdon and Otto both exclaim in amazement, and Langdon measures the tracks with a pocket tape.

"Fifteen and a quarter inches," he cries exultantly. "The biggest grizzly ever killed in British Columbia measured fourteen and a half, and this one beats him."

AT the head of the ravine, Thor climbs over the divide into a lovely valley and thence ascends to more precipitous heights.

On his way he comes on a cub black bear whose mother has been killed by a falling rock. Muskwa, the cub, licks Thor's wounds, and so the great beast allows the baby to follow him.

Thor eats wild berries that prove an emetic and feels better. Hunger now assails him and he wants heavy food. So Muskwa gets his first lesson in big-game killing. Thor stalks a young caribou, disembowels it with one stroke of his sharp-toed foot, and the two feast till Muskwa is as wide as he is long. Then they sleep while Langdon and Bruce break camp and follow.

When Thor and Muskwa go back to breakfast on their caribou they find a black bear there before them. Thor orders him away. But the black is defiant. Thor gives battle and, with their knifelike claws and terrific jaws, they mangle each other. Finally Thor gets a death-grip on the black's nose, and the fight is ended.

"My God!" cries Langdon, who is watching through a glass two miles away.

"Come on," calls Bruce. "If we hustle we can get him." But by the time they arrive on the bloody, hide-strewn battlefield, Thor is leading Muskwa over a precipitous sheep-trail into the next valley.



The GRIZZLY

A Novel of the Great Outdoors

By James Oliver Curwood

Author of "Kazan," "The Hunted Woman," etc.

CHAPTER XI

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK B. HOFFMAN

THOR was on what the Indians call a *pimootao*. His brute mind had all at once added two and two together, and while perhaps he did not make four of it, his mental arithmetic was accurate enough to convince him that straight north was the road to travel.

By the time Langdon and Bruce had reached the summit of the Bighorn Highway, and were listening to the distant tonguing of the dogs, little Muskwa was in abject despair. Following Thor had been like a game of tag with never a moment's rest.

An hour after they left the sheep trail they came to the rise in the valley where the waters separated. From this

point one creek flowed southward into the Tacla Lake country and the other northward into the Babine, which was a tributary of the Skeena. They descended very quickly into a much lower country, and for the first time Muskwa encountered marsh-land, and traveled at times through grass so rank and thick that he could not see but could only hear Thor forging on ahead of him.

The stream grew wider and deeper, and in places they skirted the edges of dark, quiet pools that Muskwa thought must have been of immeasurable depth. These pools gave Muskwa his first breathing-spells. Now and then Thor would stop and sniff over the edge of them. He was hunting for something, and yet he never seemed to find it; and

each time that he started on afresh Muskwa was so much nearer to the end of his endurance.

It was fully seven miles north of the point from which Bruce and Langdon were scanning the valley through their glasses that Thor and Muskwa came to a lake. It was a dark, unfriendly-looking lake to Muskwa, who had never seen anything but sunlit pools in the dips. The forest grew close down to its shore. In places it was almost black. Queer birds squawked in the thick reeds. It was heavy with a strange odor—a fragrance of something that made the cub lick his little chops, and filled him with hunger.

For a minute or two Thor stood sniffing this scent that filled the air. It was the smell of fish.

Slowly the big grizzly began picking his way along the edge of the lake. He soon came to the mouth of a small creek. It was not more than twenty feet wide, but it was dark and quiet and deep, like the lake itself. For a hundred yards Thor made his way up this creek, until he came to where a number of trees had fallen across it, forming a jam. Close to this jam the water was covered with a green scum. Thor knew what lay under that scum, and very quietly he crept out on the logs.

Midway in the stream he paused, and with his right paw gently brushed back the scum so that an open pool of clear water lay directly under him.

Muskwa's bright little eyes watched him from the shore. He knew that Thor was after something to eat, but how he was going to get it out of that pool of water puzzled and interested him in spite of his weariness.

Thor stretched himself out on his belly, his head and left paw well over the jam. He now put his paw a foot into the water and held it there very quietly. He could see clearly to the bottom of the stream. For a few moments he saw only this bottom, a few sticks, and the protruding end of a limb. Then a long, slim shadow moved slowly under him—a fifteen-inch trout. It was too deep for him, and Thor did not make an excited plunge.

Patiently he waited, and very soon this patience was rewarded. A beautiful red-

spotted trout floated out from under the scum; and so suddenly that Muskwa gave a yelp of terror, Thor's huge paw sent a shower of water a dozen feet into the air, and the fish landed with a thump within three feet of the cub. Instantly Muskwa was upon it. His sharp teeth dug into it as it flopped and struggled.

Thor rose on the logs, but when he saw that Muskwa had taken possession of the fish, he resumed his former position. Muskwa was just finishing his first real kill when a second spout of water shot upward and another trout pirouetted shoreward through the air. This time Thor followed quickly, for he was hungry.

It was a glorious feast they had that early afternoon beside the shaded creek. Five times Thor knocked fish out from under the scum, but for the life of him Muskwa could not eat more than his first trout.

For several hours after their dinner they lay in a cool, hidden spot close to the log-jam. Muskwa did not sleep soundly. He was beginning to understand that life was now largely a matter of personal responsibility with him, and his ears had begun to attune themselves to sound. Whenever Thor moved, or heaved a deep sigh, Muskwa knew it. After that day's Marathon with the grizzly he was filled with uneasiness—a fear that he might lose his big friend and food-killer, and he was determined that the parent he had adopted should have no opportunity of slipping away from him unheard and unseen. But Thor had no intention of deserting his little comrade. In fact, he was becoming quite fond of Muskwa.

It was not alone his hunger for fish or fear of his enemies that was bringing Thor into the lower country of the Babine waterways. For a week past there had been in him a steadily growing unrest, and it had reached its climax in these last two or three days of battle and flight. He was filled with a strange and unsatisfied yearning, and as Muskwa napped in his little bed among the bushes Thor's ears were keenly alert for certain sounds and his nose frequently sniffed the air. He wanted a mate.

It was *puskoowepesim*,—the "moulting

moon,"—and always in this moon, or the end of the "egg-laying moon," which was June, he hunted for the female that came to him from the western ranges. He was almost entirely a creature of habit, and always he made this particular detour, entering the other valley again far down toward the Babine. He never failed to feed on fish along the way, and the more fish he ate, the stronger was the odor of him. It is barely possible Thor had discovered that this perfume of golden-spotted trout made him more attractive to his lady-love. Anyway, he ate fish, and he smelled abundantly.

THOR rose and stretched himself two hours before sunset, and he knocked three more fish out of the water. Muskwa ate the head of one and Thor finished the rest. Then they continued their pilgrimage.

It was a new world that Muskwa entered now. In it there were none of the old familiar sounds. The purring drone of the upper valley was gone. There were no whistlers, and no ptarmigan, and no fat little gophers running about. The water of the lake lay still, and dark, and deep, with black and sunless pools hiding themselves under the roots of trees, so close did the forest cling to it. There were no rocks to climb over, but dank, soft logs, thick windfalls, and litters of brush. The air was different, too. It was very still. Under their feet at times was a wonderful carpet of soft moss in which Thor sank nearly to his armpits. And the forest was filled with a strange gloom and many mysterious shadows, and there hung heavily in it the pungent smells of decaying vegetation.

Thor did not travel so swiftly here. The silence and the gloom and the oppressively scented air seemed to rouse his caution. He stepped quietly; frequently he stopped and looked about him and listened; he smelled at the edges of pools hidden under the roots; every new sound brought him to a stop, his head hung low and his ears alert.

Several times Muskwa saw shadowy things floating through the gloom. They were the big gray owls that turned snow-white in winter. And once, when it was

almost dark, they came upon a pop-eyed, loose-jointed, fierce-looking creature in the trail who scurried away like a ball at sight of Thor. It was a lynx.

IT was not yet quite dark when Thor came out very quietly into a clearing, and Muskwa found himself first on the shore of a creek, and then close to a big pond. The air was full of the breath and warmth of a new kind of life. It was not fish, and yet it seemed to come from the pond, in the center of which were three or four circular masses that looked like great brush-heaps plastered with a coating of mud.

Whenever he came into this end of the valley, Thor always paid a visit to the beaver colony, and occasionally he helped himself to a fat young beaver for supper or breakfast. This evening he was not hungry, and he was in a hurry. In spite of these two facts he stood for some minutes in the shadows near the pond.

The beavers had already begun their night's work. Muskwa soon understood the significance of the shimmering streaks that ran swiftly over the surface of the water. At the end of each streak was always a dark, flat head, and now he saw that most of these streaks began at the farther edge of the pond and made directly for a long, low barrier that shut in the water a hundred yards to the east.

This particular barrier was strange to Thor, and with his maturer knowledge of beaver ways he knew that his engineering friends—whom he ate only occasionally—were broadening their domain by building a new dam. As they watched, two beaver workmen shoved a four-foot length of log into the pond with a big splash, and one of them began piloting it toward the scene of building operations, while his companion returned to other work. A little later there was a crash in the timber on the opposite side of the pond, where another workman had succeeded in felling a tree. Then Thor made his way toward the dam.

Almost instantly there was a terrific crack out in the middle of the pond, followed by a tremendous splash. An old beaver had seen Thor, and with the flat



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READING ROOM
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side of his broad tail had given the surface of the water a warning slap that cut the still air like a rifle-shot. All at once there were splashings and divings in every direction, and a moment later the pond was ruffled and heaving as a score of interrupted workers dived excitedly under the surface to the safety of their brush-ribbed and mud-plastered strongholds, and Muskwa was so absorbed in the general excitement that he almost forgot to follow Thor.

He overtook the grizzly at the dam. For a few moments Thor inspected the new work, and then tested it with his weight. It was solid, and over this bridge ready built for them they crossed to the higher ground on the opposite side. A few hundred yards farther on, Thor struck a fairly well beaten caribou trail which in the course of half an hour led them around the end of the lake to the outlet-stream flowing north.

Every minute Muskwa was hoping that Thor would stop. His afternoon's nap had not taken the lameness out of his legs or the soreness from the tender pads of his feet. He had had enough, and more than enough, of travel, and could he have regulated the world according to his own wishes, he would not have walked another mile for a whole month. Mere walking would not have been so bad, but to keep up with Thor's ambling gait he was compelled to trot, like a stubby four-year-old-child hanging desperately to the thumb of a big and fast-walking man. Muskwa had not even a thumb to hang to. The bottoms of his feet were like boils; his tender nose was raw from contact with brush and the knife-edged marsh-grass, and his little back felt all caved in. Still, he hung on desperately, until the creek-bottom was again sand and gravel, and traveling was easier.

THE stars were up now, millions of them,

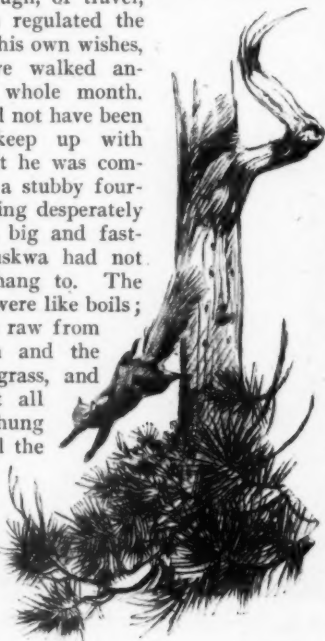
clear and brilliant; and it was quite evident that Thor had set his mind on an "all-night hike," a *kuppatipisk pimootao*, as a Cree tracker would have called it. Just how it would have ended for Muskwa is a matter of conjecture, had not the spirits of thunder and rain and lightning put their heads together to give him a rest.

For perhaps an hour the stars were undimmed, and Thor kept on like a heathen without a soul, while Muskwa limped on all four feet. Then a low rumbling gathered in the west. It grew louder and louder, and approached swiftly—straight from the warm Pacific. Thor grew uneasy, and sniffed in the face of it. Livid streaks began to criss-cross a huge pall of black that was closing in on them like a vast curtain. The stars began to go out. A moaning wind came—and then the rain.

Thor had found a huge rock that shelved inward, like a lean-to, and he crept back under this with Muskwa before the deluge descended. For many minutes it was more like a flood than a rain. It seemed as though a part of the

Pacific Ocean had been scooped up and dropped on them, and in half an hour the creek was a torrent.

The lightning and the crash of thunder terrified Muskwa. Now he could see Thor in great blinding flashes of fire, and the next instant it was as black as pitch; the tops of the mountains seemed falling down into the valley; the earth trembled and shook—and he snuggled closer and closer to Thor until at last he lay between Thor's forearms, half buried in the long hair of the big grizzly's shaggy chest. Thor himself was not much concerned in these noisy convulsions of nature, except to keep himself dry. When he took a bath he wanted the sun to be shining and a nice warm rock close at hand on which to stretch himself.



For a long time after its first fierce outbreak the rain continued to fall in a gentle shower. Muskwa liked this, and under the sheltering rock, snuggled against Thor, he felt very comfortable and easily fell asleep. Through long hours Thor kept his vigil alone, drowsing now and then, but kept from sound slumber by the restlessness that was in him.

It stopped raining soon after midnight, but it was very dark; the stream was flooding over its bars, and Thor remained under the rock. Muskwa had a splendid sleep.

DAY had come when Thor's stirring aroused Muskwa. He followed the grizzly out into the open, feeling tremendously better than last night, though his feet were still sore and his body was stiff.

Thor began to follow the creek again. Along this stream there were low flats and many small bayous where grew luxuriantly the tender grass and roots and especially the slim, long-stemmed lilies on which Thor was fond of feeding. But for a thousand-pound grizzly to fill up on such vegetarian dainties as these consumed many hours, if not one's whole time, and Thor considered that he had no time to lose. Thor was a most ardent lover when he loved at all, which was only a few days out of the year; and during these days he twisted his mode of living around so that while the spirit possessed him he no longer existed for the sole purpose of eating and growing fat. For a short time he put aside his habit of living to eat, and ate to live; and poor Muskwa was almost famished before another dinner was forthcoming.

But at last, early in the afternoon, Thor came to a pool which he could not pass. It was not a dozen feet in width, and it was alive with trout. The fish had not been able to reach the lake above, and they had waited too long after the flood-season to descend into the deeper waters of the Babine and the Skeena. They had taken refuge in this pool, which was now about to become a death-trap.

At one end the water was two feet



deep—at the other end only a few inches. After pondering over this fact for a few moments, the grizzly waded openly into the deepest part, and from the bank above, Muskwa saw the shimmering trout darting into the shallower water. Thor advanced slowly, and now, when he stood in less than eight inches of water, the panic-stricken fish one after another tried to escape back into the deeper part of the pool.

Again and again Thor's big right paw swept up great showers of water. The first inundation knocked Muskwa off his feet. But with it came a two-pound trout which the cub quickly dragged out of range and began eating. So agitated became the pool because of the mighty strokes of Thor's paw that the trout completely lost their heads, and no sooner did they reach one end than they turned about and darted for the other. They kept this up until the grizzly had thrown fully a dozen of their number ashore.

SO absorbed was Muskwa in his fish, and Thor in his fishing, that neither had noticed a visitor. Both saw him at about the same time, and for fully thirty seconds they stood and stared, Thor in his pool and the cub over his fish, utter amazement robbing them of the power of movement. The visitor was another grizzly, and as coolly as though he had done the fishing himself, he began eating the fish which Thor had thrown out!

A worse insult or a deadlier challenge could not have been known in the land of Beardom. Even Muskwa sensed that fact. He looked expectantly at Thor. There was going to be another fight, and he licked his little chops in anticipation.

Thor came up out of the pool slowly. On the bank he paused. The grizzlies gazed at each other, the newcomer crunching a fish as he looked. Neither growled. Muskwa perceived no signs of enmity, and then to his increased astonishment Thor began eating a fish within three feet of the interloper!

Perhaps man is the finest of all God's creations, but when it comes to his respect for old age he is no better, and sometimes not as good, as a grizzly bear: for Thor would not rob an old bear; he would not fight an old bear; and he would not drive an old bear from his own meat—which is more than can be said of some humans. And the visitor was an old bear, and a sick bear as well. He stood almost as high as Thor, but he was so old that he was only half as broad across the chest, and his neck and head were grotesquely thin. The Indians have a name for him. *Kuyas Wapusk* they call him—the bear so old he is about to die. They let him go unharmed; other bears tolerate him and let him eat their meat if he chances along; the white man kills him.

This old bear was famished. His claws were gone; his hair was thin, and in some places his skin was naked; and he had barely more than red, hard gums to chew with. If he lived until autumn he would den up—for the last time. Perhaps death would come even sooner than that. If so, *Kuyas Wapusk* would know in time, and he would crawl off into some hidden cave or deep crevice in the rocks to breathe his last. For in all the Rocky Mountains, so far as Bruce or Langdon knew, there was not a man who had found the bones or body of a grizzly that had died a natural death!

And big, hunted Thor, torn by wound and pursued by man, seemed to understand that this would be the last real feast on earth for *Kuyas Wapusk*—too old to fish for himself, too old to hunt, too old even to dig out the tender lily-roots; and so Thor let him eat until the

last fish was gone, and then went on, with Muskwa tagging at his heels.

CHAPTER XII

FOR still another two hours Thor led Muskwa on that tiresome jaunt into the North. They had traveled a good twenty miles since leaving the Bighorn Highway, and to the little tan-faced cub those twenty miles were like a journey around the world. Ordinarily he would not have gone that far away from his birthplace until his second year, and very possibly his third.

Not once in this hike down the valley had Thor wasted time on the mountain slopes. He had picked out the easiest trails along the creek. Three or four miles below the pool where they had left the old bear, he suddenly changed this procedure by swinging due westward, and a little later they were once more climbing a mountain. They went up a long green slide for a quarter of a mile, and luckily for Muskwa's legs this brought them to the smooth plain-like floor of a break which took them without much more effort out on the slopes of the other valley. This was the valley in which Thor had killed the black bear, twenty miles to the southward.

From the moment Thor looked out over the northern limits of his range a change took possession of him. All at once he lost his eagerness to hurry. For fifteen minutes he stood looking down into the valley, sniffing the air. He descended slowly, and when he reached the green meadows and the creek-bottom he *mooshed* along straight in the face of the wind, which was coming from the south and west. It did not bring him the scent he wanted—the smell of his mate. Yet an instinct that was more infallible than reason told him that she was near, or should be near. He did not take accident or sickness or the possibility of hunters having killed her into consideration. This was where he had always started in to hunt for her, and sooner or later he had found her. He knew her smell. And he crossed and re-crossed the bottoms so that it could not escape him.

When Thor was love-sick, he was more



From the bank above, Muskwa saw the shimmering trout darting into shallower water.

or less like a man: that is to say, he was an idiot. The importance of all other things dwindled into nothingness. His habits, which were as fixed as the stars at other times, took a complete vacation. He even forgot hunger, and the whistlers and gophers were quite safe. He was tireless. He rambled during the night as well as the day in quest of his lady-love.

It was quite natural that in these exciting hours he should forget Muskwa almost entirely. At least ten times before sunset he crossed and recrossed the creek, and the disgusted and almost ready-to-quit cub waded and swam and floundered after him until he was nearly drowned. The tenth or doventh time Thor forded the stream Muskwa revolted and followed along on his own side. It was not long before the grizzly returned.

It was soon after this, just as the sun was setting, that the unexpected happened. What little wind there was suddenly swung straight into the east, and from the western slopes half a mile away it brought a scent that held Thor motionless in his tracks for perhaps half a minute, and then sent him off on that ambling run which is the ungainliest of all four-footed creatures' gaits.

Muskwa rolled after him like a ball, pegging away for dear life, but losing ground at every jump. In that half-mile stretch he would have lost Thor altogether if the grizzly had not stopped near the bottom of the first slope to take fresh reckonings. When he started up the slope, Muskwa could see him, and with a yelping cry for him to wait a minute he set after Thor again.

TWO or three hundred yards up the mountain-side the slope shelved downward into a hollow, or dip, and nosing about in this dip, questing the air as Thor had quested it, was the beautiful she-grizzly from over the range. With her was one of her last year's cubs. Thor was within fifty yards of her when he came over the crest. He stopped. He looked at her. And Iskwa, "the female," looked at him.

Then followed true bear courtship. All haste, all eagerness, all desire for his

mate, seemed to have left Thor; and if Iskwa had been eager and yearning, she was profoundly indifferent now. For two or three minutes Thor stood looking casually about, and this gave Muskwa time to come up and perch himself beside him, expecting another fight.

As though Thor were a thousand miles or so from her thoughts, Iskwa turned over a flat rock and began hunting for grubs and ants, and not to be outdone in this stoic unconcern, Thor pulled up a bunch of grass and swallowed it. Iskwa moved a step or two, and Thor moved a step or two, and as if purely by accident, their steps were toward each other.

Muskwa was puzzled. The older cub was puzzled. They sat on their haunches like two dogs, one three times as big as the other, and wondered what was going to happen.

It took Thor and Iskwa five minutes to arrive within five feet of each other, and then very decorously they smelled noses.

The year-old cub joined the family circle. He was of just the right age to have an exceedingly long name, for the Indians called him *Pipoonaskoos*—"the yearling." He came boldly up to Thor and his mother. For a moment Thor did not seem to notice him. Then Thor's long right arm shot out in a sudden swinging upper-cut that lifted *Pipoonaskoos* clean off the ground and sent him spinning two-thirds of the distance up to Muskwa.

The mother paid no attention to this elimination of her offspring, and still lovingly smelled noses with Thor. Muskwa, however, thought this was the preliminary of another tremendous fight, and with a yelp of defiance he darted down the slope and set upon *Pipoonaskoos* with all his might.

Pipoonaskoos was "mother's boy." That is, he was one of those cubs who persist in following their mothers through a second season, instead of striking out for themselves. He had nursed until he was five months old; his parent had continued to hunt tidbits for him; he was fat, and sleek, and soft; he was, in fact, a "Willie-boy" of the mountains.

On the other hand, a few days had

put a lot of real mettle into Muskwa, and though he was only a third as large as Pipoonaskoos, and his feet were sore, and his back ached, he landed on the other cub like a shot out of a gun.

Still dazed by the blow of Thor's paw, Pipoonaskoos gave a yelping call to his mother for help at this sudden onslaught. He had never been in a fight, and he rolled over on his back and side, kicking and scratching and yelping as Muskwa's needle-like teeth sank again and again into his tender hide.

Luckily Muskwa got him once by the nose, and bit deep, and if there was any sand at all in Willie Pipoonaskoos this took it out of him, and while Muskwa held on for dear life, Willie let out a stream of yelps, informing his mother that he was being murdered. To these cries Iskwaos paid no attention at all, but continued to smell noses with Thor.

Finally freeing his bleeding nose, Pipoonaskoos shook Muskwa off by sheer force of superior weight and took to flight on a dead run. Muskwa pegged valiantly after him. Twice they made the circle of the basin, and in spite of his shorter legs, Muskwa was a close second in the race when Pipoonaskoos, turning an affrighted glance sidewise for an instant, hit against a rock and went sprawling. In another moment Muskwa was at him again, and he would have continued biting and snarling until there was no more strength left in him, had he not happened to see Thor and Iskwaos disappearing slowly over the edge of the slope toward the valley.

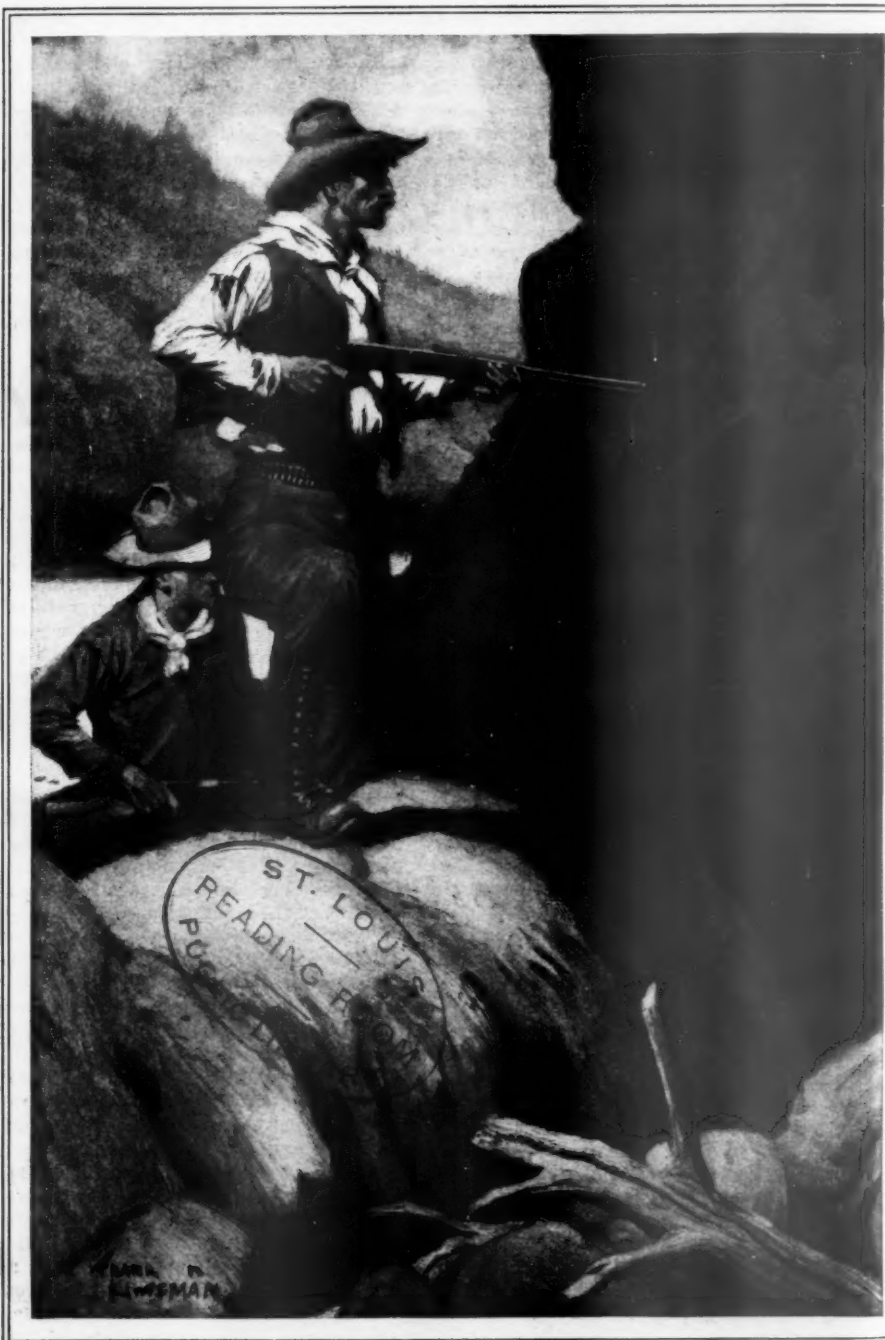
Almost immediately Muskwa forgot fighting. He was amazed to find that Thor, instead of tearing up the other bear, was walking off with her. Pipoonaskoos also pulled himself together and looked. Then Muskwa looked at Pipoonaskoos, and Pipoonaskoos looked at Muskwa. The tan-faced cub licked his chops just once, as if torn between the prospective delight of mauling Pipoonaskoos and the more imperative duty of following Thor. The other gave him no choice. With a whimpering yelp he set off after his mother.

Exciting times followed for the two

cubs. All that night Thor and Iskwaos kept by themselves in the buffalo-willow thickets and the balsams of the creek-bottom; early in the evening Pipoonaskoos sneaked up to his mother again, and Thor lifted him into the middle of the creek. The second visual proof of Thor's displeasure impinged upon Muskwa the fact that the older bears were not in a mood to tolerate the companionship of cubs, and the result was a wary and suspicious truce between him and Pipoonaskoos.

ALL the next day, Thor and Iskwaos kept to themselves. Early in the morning Muskwa began adventuring about a little in quest of food. He liked tender grass, but it was not very filling. Several times he saw Pipoonaskoos digging in the soft bottom close to the creek, and finally he drove the other cub away from a partly digged hole and investigated for himself. After a little more excavating he pulled out a white, bulbous, tender root that he thought was the sweetest and nicest thing he had ever eaten, not even excepting fish. It was the one *bonne bouche* of all the good things he would eventually learn to eat—the spring beauty. One other thing alone was at all comparable with it, and that was the dog-tooth violet. Spring beauties were growing about him abundantly, and he continued to dig until his feet were grievously tender. But he had the satisfaction of being comfortably fed.

Thor was again responsible for a fight between Muskwa and Pipoonaskoos. Late in the afternoon the older bears were lying down side by side in a thicket when, without any apparent reason at all, Thor opened his huge jaws and emitted a low, steady, growling roar that sounded very much like the sound he had made when tearing the life out of the big black. Iskwaos raised her head and joined him in the tumult, both of them perfectly good natured and quite happy during the operation. Why mating bears indulge in this blood-curdling duet is a mystery which only the bears themselves can explain. It lasts for about a minute, and during this particular minute Muskwa, who lay outside the thicket,



As it was torn to pieces, the Airedale emitted piercing cries of agony that reached Bruce and Langdon as they hurried panting and wind-broken up the slide that led from the basin.

CHAPTER XIII

thought that surely the glorious hour had come when Thor was beating up the parent of Pipoonaskoos. And instantly he looked for Pipoonaskoos. If there were fighting to be done, the tan-faced cub proposed to do his share.

UNFORTUNATELY the Willie-bear came sneaking around the edge of the brush just then, and Muskwa gave him no chance to ask questions. He shot at him in a black streak, and Pipoonaskoos was bowled over like a fat baby. For several minutes they bit and dug and clawed, most of the biting and digging and clawing being done by Muskwa, while Pipoonaskoos devoted his time and energy to yelping.

Finally the larger cub got away and again took to flight. Muskwa pursued him, into the brush and out, down to the creek and back, halfway up the slope and down again, until he was so tired he had to drop on his belly for a rest.

At this juncture Thor emerged from the thicket. He was alone. For the first time since last night he seemed to notice Muskwa. Then he sniffed the wind up the valley and down the valley, and after that turned and walked straight toward the distant slopes down which they had come the preceding afternoon. Muskwa was both pleased and perplexed. He wanted to go into the thicket and snarl and pull at the hide of the dead bear that must be in there, and he also wanted to finish Pipoonaskoos. After a moment or two of hesitation he ran after Thor and again followed close at his heels.

After a little Iskwao came from the thicket and nosed the wind as Thor had felt it. Then she turned in the opposite direction, and with Pipoonaskoos close behind her, went up the slope and continued slowly and steadily in the face of the setting sun.

So ended Thor's love-making, for the time being, at least, and Muskwa's first fighting; and together they trailed eastward again, to face the most terrible peril that had ever come into the mountains for four-footed beast—a peril that was merciless, a peril from which there was no escape, a peril that was fraught with death.

THE first night after leaving Iskwao and Pipoonaskoos the big grizzly and the tan-faced cub wandered without sleep under the brilliant stars. Thor did not hunt for meat. He climbed a steep slope, then went down the shale side of a dip, and in a small basin hidden at the foot of a mountain came to a soft green meadow where the dog-tooth violet, with its slender stem, its two lily-like leaves, its single cluster of five-petaled flowers, and its luscious, bulbous root, grew in great profusion. And here all through the night he dug and ate.

Muskwa, who had filled himself on spring-beauty roots, was not hungry, and as the day had been a restful one for him, outside of his fighting, he found this night filled with its brilliant stars quite enjoyable. The moon came up about ten o'clock, and it was the biggest and the reddest and the most beautiful moon Muskwa had seen in his short life. It rolled up over the peaks like a forest fire, and filled all the Rocky Mountains with a wonderful glow. The basin, in which there were perhaps ten acres of meadow, was lighted up almost like day. The little lake at the foot of the mountain glimmered softly, and the tiny stream that fed it from the melting snows a thousand feet above, shot down in glistening cascades that caught the moonlight like rivulets of dull polished diamonds.

About the meadow were scattered little clumps of bushes and a few balsams and spruce, as if set there for ornamental purposes; and on one side there was a narrow, verdure-covered slide that sloped upward for a third of a mile, and at the top of which, unseen by Muskwa and Thor, a band of sheep were sleeping.

Muskwa wandered about, always near Thor, investigating the clumps of bushes, the dark shadows of the balsams and spruce, and the edge of the lake. Here he found a puddle of soft mud which was a great solace to his sore feet. Twenty times during the night he waded in the mud.

Even when the dawn came, Thor seemed to be in no great haste to leave

the basin. Until the sun was well up he continued to wander about the meadow and the edge of the lake, digging up occasional roots, and eating tender grass. This did not displease Muskwa, who made his breakfast of the dog-tooth violet bulbs. The one matter that puzzled him was why Thor did not go into the lake and throw out trout, for he still had to learn that all water did not contain fish. At last he went fishing for himself, and succeeded in getting a black hard-shelled water-beetle that nipped his nose and brought a yelp from him.

It was perhaps ten o'clock, and the sun-filled basin was like a warm oven to a thick-coated bear, when Thor searched up among the rocks near the waterfall until he found a place that was as cool as an old-fashioned cellar. It was a miniature cavern. All about it the slate and sandstone was of a dark and clammy wetness from a hundred little trickles of snow-water that ran down from the peaks.

It was just the sort of a place Thor loved on a July day, but to Muskwa it was dark and gloomy and not a thousandth part as pleasant as the sun. So after an hour or two he left Thor in his frigidarium and began to investigate the treacherous ledges.

For a few minutes all went well—then he stepped on a green-tinted slope of slate over which a very shallow dribble of water was running. The water had been running over it in just that way for some centuries, and the shelving slate was worn as smooth as the surface of a polished pearl, and it was as slippery as a greased pole. Muskwa's feet went out from under him so quickly that he hardly knew what had happened. The next moment he was on his way to the lake a hundred feet below. He rolled over and over. He plashed into shallow pools. He bounced over miniature waterfalls like a rubber ball. The wind was knocked out of him. He was blinded and dazed by water and shock, and he gathered fresh speed with every yard he made. He had succeeded in letting out half a dozen terrified yelps at the start, and these roused Thor.

Where the water from the peaks fell into the lake there was a precipitous drop of ten feet, and over this Muskwa shot with a momentum that carried him twice as far out into the pond. He hit with a big splash, and disappeared. Down and down he went, where everything was black and cold and suffocating; then the life-preserver with which nature had endowed him in the form of his fat brought him to the surface. He began to paddle with all four feet. It was his first swim, and when he finally dragged himself ashore he was limp and exhausted.

While he still lay panting and very much frightened, Thor came down from the rocks. Muskwa's mother had given him a sound cuffing when he got the porcupine quill in his foot. She had cuffed him for every accident he had had, because she believed that cuffing was good medicine. Education is largely cuffed into a bear cub, and she would have given him a fine cuffing now. But Thor only smelled of him, saw that he was all right, and began to dig up a dog-tooth violet.

He had not finished the violet when suddenly he stopped. For a half-minute he stood like a statue. Muskwa jumped and and shook himself. Then he listened. A sound came to both of them. In one slow, graceful movement the grizzly reared himself to his full height. He faced the north, his ears thrust forward, the sensitive muscles of his nostrils twitching. He could smell nothing, but he *heard*!

Over the slopes which they had climbed there had come to him faintly a sound that was new to him, a sound that had never before been a part of his life. It was the barking of dogs.

FOR two minutes Thor sat on his haunches without moving a muscle of his great body except those twitching thews in his nose.

Deep down in this cup under the mountain it was difficult even for sound to reach him. Quickly he swung down on all fours and made for the green slope to the southward, at the top of which the band of sheep had slept dur-

A Story of
THE RIVER
OF ROMANCE
AND FOLLY

The Big Iron Gate

By Opie Read

Author of "The Jucklins," etc.

MAJOR PEW-ITT'S

domination over young Bill Hawkins had been insinuatingly established, and now the old soldier would see to it that it should be adroitly maintained. The young fellow fancied himself free and courageous in his own independence; and so think we all when the touch of Satanic guidance is light upon the shoulder. In Natchez, Hawkins sat musing upon his recent and boldly adventurous past:

"To regard myself as a man of honor and at the same time to know that I have committed a robbery—a queer feeling! No degree of ill luck could have induced me to cheat at cards, but after being hammered yellow and blue on the steamer *Black Hawk*, I carried out a program agreed on with the Major, got up from the table, went to my room, disguised myself, returned with a cocked pistol and robbed the players of something like twenty thousand dollars. After the thrill of it, I am now confessing it to myself. Do I wish that I hadn't done it? I don't know. But there are features that I can't help regretting. Among the players was Colonel Pem-



ILLUSTRATED BY
RAE VAN BUREN

berton, a type of Southerner soon to become extinct. I wish I hadn't taken his money, but I was so situated that I couldn't make an exception in his case. It tickles me, however, to look back and to see myself gathering up the money in front of Pugh, the professional gambler; and I chuckle somewhat to know that I nipped an English cotton-buyer named Tomkins. Served him right for spelling his name that way. But I wish I could

somehow have handed back the Colonel's money."

His musing was interrupted by the Major, who remarked:

"My dear Billy, always rob robbers, and you'll be virtuous."

"Yes, that's all right, but suppose there are honest men among the robbers, as in the case of Colonel Pemberton—what then?"

The Major paused in his military stride up and down the room, reached forth from the window, and plucked a rose off a vine clambering the wall.

"William, if honest men go among robbers and make gaming companions of them, it is their lookout and not ours. Honest men are warned to beware of bad

company. The old Colonel won your money. His hand topped yours, and he knew it. In his mind he was satisfied that he was betting on a sure thing, and that in itself is a sort of robbery."

"In a way your reasoning is right," the young man admitted.

"In a way!" the Major echoed. "Right knows nothing of compromise and halfway measures. If a thing is right only in a way, it is wrong. Come, don't let what money you have of the Colonel's bother you."

"I wot. It's the money I haven't got that bothers me."

"Willie, you are true metal. You may not be a very great scholar, but you are a gentleman, which is much more. At times I was afraid that I discerned sprouting within you a sort of artificial conscience, but then most happily have I seen your more genuine nature overcome it. Hawkins, one of the greatest drawbacks in this life is a hot-house conscience. It is the anemia of all higher purpose. A slight infusion of barbaric blood improves an old and effete royal family. But manhood is never improved by thin blood. Don't, therefore, let a worn-out system of morals weaken your nature."

THE two friends were quartered in the leading hotel in Natchez. Well provided with money and in fine health, Hawkins had but little to worry him. In a club just across the street from the hotel there was a nightly poker game. "We will join it as soon as we have become accustomed to the atmosphere," the Major said. He was acquainted with all the towns along the lower river, and was waiting for his young friend to fill his eyes with observation.

The boy found much to entrance him—places like Natchez Under the Hill, where toughs fought handkerchief duels, the combatants taking hold of the corners of a handkerchief with the teeth, one hand strapped to the side, the other armed with a Bowie-knife, and then slashing till both were killed. Uptown there were sightly and imposing old mansions, one of them with an iron fence about it, and with a ponderous gate, the

home of the Pemberton who most kindly had urged Hawkins to visit him, little suspecting that it was this graceful youth who had held a pistol over his venerable head.

The Major, who soon found out everything, learned that the Colonel did not gamble except when away from home, his wife being much given to church work.

Soon there arrived an invitation from the Colonel's home. It was borne by an old negro in a deacon make-up, having no doubt been rigged for the occasion by the religious mistress of the household. A note on a silver tray announced that the Major and Mr. Hawkins were expected at supper that evening, "just a family meal."

"Which will suit our purposes just as well as if there were a thousand present," said the Major when the old negro had back-scraped himself out of the room. "It will soon be known all over town that we were invited there, and that will be a social recognition. Now, Billy, don't entertain in your mind the notion that I harp too much on social recognition. Social recognition helps a gambler in the South as much as religion does a banker in the North. I tell you, sir, that the whole scheme of life is a game, and it's a good bit with the player whether he wins or loses."

WHEN the time came, the Major stepped out of his room arrayed in Confederate gray, with a profusion of braid and a glitter of brass buttons. Hawkins knew that this resplendent garb could not have known service in the army, surely not with a band of guerrillas, and made inquiry as to why his friend had thus tailored himself.

"William, the answer to your question is so simple that I wonder why you asked it," the Major made answer as he locked his door; and when they had passed out upon the sidewalk, he began thus to enlighten the youth.

"You saw those ladies we just met in the lobby giving to me their admiring glances. You saw that old gentleman lift his faded hat to me. Do you suppose the costliest civilian suit ever turned out by the most expensive tailor in New

Orleans could attract such attention? And it means, sir, that if ever we should get hard up, we could borrow money. This suit of gray is collateral, Willie. By the way, if anyone should ask you, say that I was with Forrest during the War."

The negro deacon was on the lookout for them and came shuffling to open the big iron gate. Almost bowing his polished head to the gravel walk, he ushered them in; and out upon the portico came the old Colonel, holding forth his welcoming hand. With a hearty laugh he drew them into his library, scented sweet with the bloom of the magnolia, freshly gathered from the great trees in the yard. Soon they were aware of a perfume vastly sweeter, at least sweeter for the Major, for there on the ponderous old mahogany center-table stood three tall goblets, green with mint and blushing with cherries, exhaling the essence of liquor distilled in a log cabin by some old artist who slept too soon to have heard the thunder of the Civil War. Over these bouquets the Colonel swept a slow flourish and ended a speech in which one might have thought he was dedicating a monument.

They sat sipping the nectar, grateful noses in the mint, for it were a profanation, the Major declared, to draw through a straw this sacred juice of Olympus.

"Gentlemen," the Colonel declared over his goblet, the mint bearding his chin, "I hope that our modest little city has not proved disappointing to you."

The Major licked a drop of sweet essence from his lip. "On the contrary, we are delighted, sir. Important letters with drafts were awaiting both of us, which we stood in need of after our—"

With a wink the Colonel blurred out the remainder of the speech. The Major snapped up its significance. "I understand. Not a word here or even in town."

"Major, I thank you, sir."

"Colonel, not at all, sir."

The Major was as deft a liar as ever wheedled money out of an old woman or beguiled a maiden of her fair name. Letters! But in truth he had received

one, from a bank in Savannah, informing him that his note for three hundred dollars was due.

THEY had finished with the juleps, and the Major's mouth, it might well have been fancied, was watering for more, when the mistress of the household entered the room, shedding a courtesy that spoke of Old Virginia. Pale, tall and graceful for her age, she gave to the Major an instinctive bow—doubtless catching a sniff of his character—and then advanced toward Hawkins with her hand held out. With inherited gallantry, he touched it with his lips. At this moment she seemed for the first time to observe the Major's uniform. He gave her a military salute, a sudden droop, a sigh over the lost cause—and Hawkins knew that many a meal would be waiting for them in that house.

"Madam," said the Major. "I believe that your aunt, Lavenia Trueman, became the wife of Dodderson Crawley. Ah, and your first cousin, Martha Wingright, married Oscar, the third son of T. Andrew Balch, member of Congress from Louisiana."

She gave him a look, and Hawkins could see more dinners waiting for him. His information was correct, she said, smiling upon him, wondering how he could have kept it in his mind so long; and saluting, he replied that there were some things that not even an unretentive mind could forget. Hawkins sat smiling, for well he knew that not more than three hours had elapsed since this unforgettable family history had been received from the keeper of a livery stable.

Meantime the Colonel was busy with his slow ceremony, a word now and then by way of emphasis; and what a charm it was to the young man, this bit of heavy but adroit comedy!

"Madam," said the Major after serious reflection, "I trust that your new minister, the Reverend Mr. Tarkins, is all that you desire."

"Oh, Mr. Tarkins is such a good man," she declared with fervor; and the Major, edging around near enough to Hawkins, whispered to him: "He's an ass."

"I am so glad to hear it," the Major

enthusiastically confessed himself, beginning with a military salute but ending with a gesture of benediction. "We can go out into the markets, madam, and purchase mere minds, but hearts are not for sale."

It was on Hawkins' tongue to say that heart flushes were, but he caught himself in time to turn it off with a warmed-over platitude, like a sick man's gruel. At this moment he heard the Colonel's voice:

"My daughter Cisne."

HAWKINS had not seen her as she came in; indeed, to him she had not come in—she seemed to have been created in a second, in a flash that had blinded him. How joyously frank she was, shaking with laughter her black and lustrous ringlets, too short for curls. The Colonel's eyes were blue, and gray were the eyes of his wife, but this girl's eyes were of darkest brown. Of complexion the Colonel and his wife were light, but Cisne was dark; and it seemed that on her upper lip were minute tracings of a fine black pencil. Too full of life for poise, she was a series of continuous pictures, another one coming before the one already there was gone; and to Hawkins as he caught her swift and unconscious graces, it seemed that nature projected her to dance an endless quadrille. In one moment he fancied that she could be serious, but before the thought was more than half formed, she was in a new mood, a kittenish mischief; and he mused that if he were to toss her a ball of yarn she would play with it on the floor.

The deacon announced supper. Cisne plucked at Hawkins' sleeve and rippled him into the old black-walnut dining-room, where the smoky portraits of unheard-of statesmen and women in scarecrowish finery looked down from the wall. At one end of a table, long enough for a banquet to the mayor and board of aldermen, they gathered, Mrs. Pemberton nodding to her husband—whereupon he mumbled an inarticulate "grace" over a baked shote on a catafalque of silver, reposing in gravied rest with a red apple in his mouth. Just beyond the shote whose life had been

recently sacrificed was the boiled ham of one of his ancestors, stuck full of cloves, while scattered about the board were more pickles, jellies and preserves, than were likely to be met with outside of housewife's day at a State fair. With dexterous ease the Colonel began to carve the shote, and Major Pewitt remarked:

"I suppose, sir, that you recollect the old story of the Georgia farmer who was forced to favor a breed of slim hogs because they could outrun a nigger. But the one we have with us doesn't appear, by his bulk, to have come from that family."

The Colonel paused with a slab of pork on his fork, the juice dripping. "Possibly not. I don't believe I can pay tribute to the swiftness of this shote, since I bought him from a nigger, sir."

The black deacon chuckled, his chin down among the ruffles of his shirt, and Cisne broke out in a ringing laugh. A look from Mrs. Pemberton silenced the darky, but Cisne continued to laugh, plucking Hawkins by the sleeve.

"**MAJOR**, I suppose you attend church regularly."

It was Mrs. Pemberton who made this inquiry. The Major bowed to her. "Yes, madam. I was designed for the church, but misfortune forced me into—I might say unholier channels. As we were on our way to this devoted home to-day, I said to my young friend: 'William, if a certain aim I have in mind should bear fruit, you shall go to the best theological school in the world, sir. And—'"

"Noble of you," the good woman broke in, and the Major thanked her. Now she looked at Hawkins, and again the beautiful Cisne plucked at the young man's sleeve.

Hawkins bowed and thus answered the inquiring look: "Madam, I am not good enough for so lofty a calling."

On his cheek he felt the thrill of Cisne's breath. "Glad of it," she whispered.

The Colonel was a hypocrite only when compelled by necessity: he did not enjoy lying, and from this talk he held aloof, but with devoted shortsight-

edness his wife strove to draw him into it.

"Don't you think Mr. Hawkins might adorn the pulpit?" she asked of him, and the old gentleman fingered a clove plucked from a slice of ham.

"Mr. Hawkins is—I might say that Mr. Hawkins, as I have told you and Cisne, is from a most excellent family, and—"

"Oh," Cisne cried, "do tell us about that Lord What's-his-name drinking champagne out of your grandmother's slipper. Wasn't it cute?"

The Major's aid was needed, and he helped his young friend over this, a slippery place. "With the fondness for that drink I used to possess, I should have chosen a lady with a larger foot," he said.

"A grandfather's boot," the Colonel roared, throwing himself back in his chair. With the merest suggestion of a frown, Mrs. Pemberton reproved him, but Cisne giggled her approval in perfect freedom.

Soon the bland Major began to show signs of restlessness, and Hawkins knew that the game across the street from the hotel was on his mind.

"William, we must not forget our engagement," the Major said presently. And then to the Colonel he explained: "A lawyer with papers for me to sign is to call at the hotel." Then to Mrs. Pemberton: "I dislike business, madam. No matter how trivial it may be, it has about it an air of solemnity that reminds us of our approaching end—when we may not have lived in proper preparation—but we must day by day—"

He broke off, dabbed at his eyes with his handkerchief, looked at Mrs. Pemberton and brightened. "Let us assure you that we have had a most profitable and delightful evening. Madam, you recall vividly to mind my youngest sister, now the second wife of Judge Padgett, of Richmond. She was known as the Belle of Augusta."

WHEN clear of the premises, Hawkins walked with new life in his blood; over and over in his mind there was a flashing vision; and echoing were the words of her artless exuberance:

"You will come to see us again, wont you?"

"Fine old family!" was the Major's appreciation; and then he lamented: "Pity he hasn't more money."

"Pity I took what he had," the young man's heart spoke out.

"Ah, you don't say? Pity he bet on a sure thing, as well, and took yours. As I have said to you, don't make a hot-house plant of your conscience. . . . Now, if that game over there is as loose as they say it is, we ought to skin those polite gentlemen out of at least six hundred dollars to-night. And that amount I consider not more than a fair interest on our bonds of experience. We'll play a few loose pots and then, if necessary, tighten up. Luck being with you, pots come bigger and faster playing loose. . . . What's that girl's name?"

After an artful hesitation, Hawkins answered: "Cisne."

"Ah! If I didn't know that the old man had not been married twice, I should say that his former wife was an Italian."

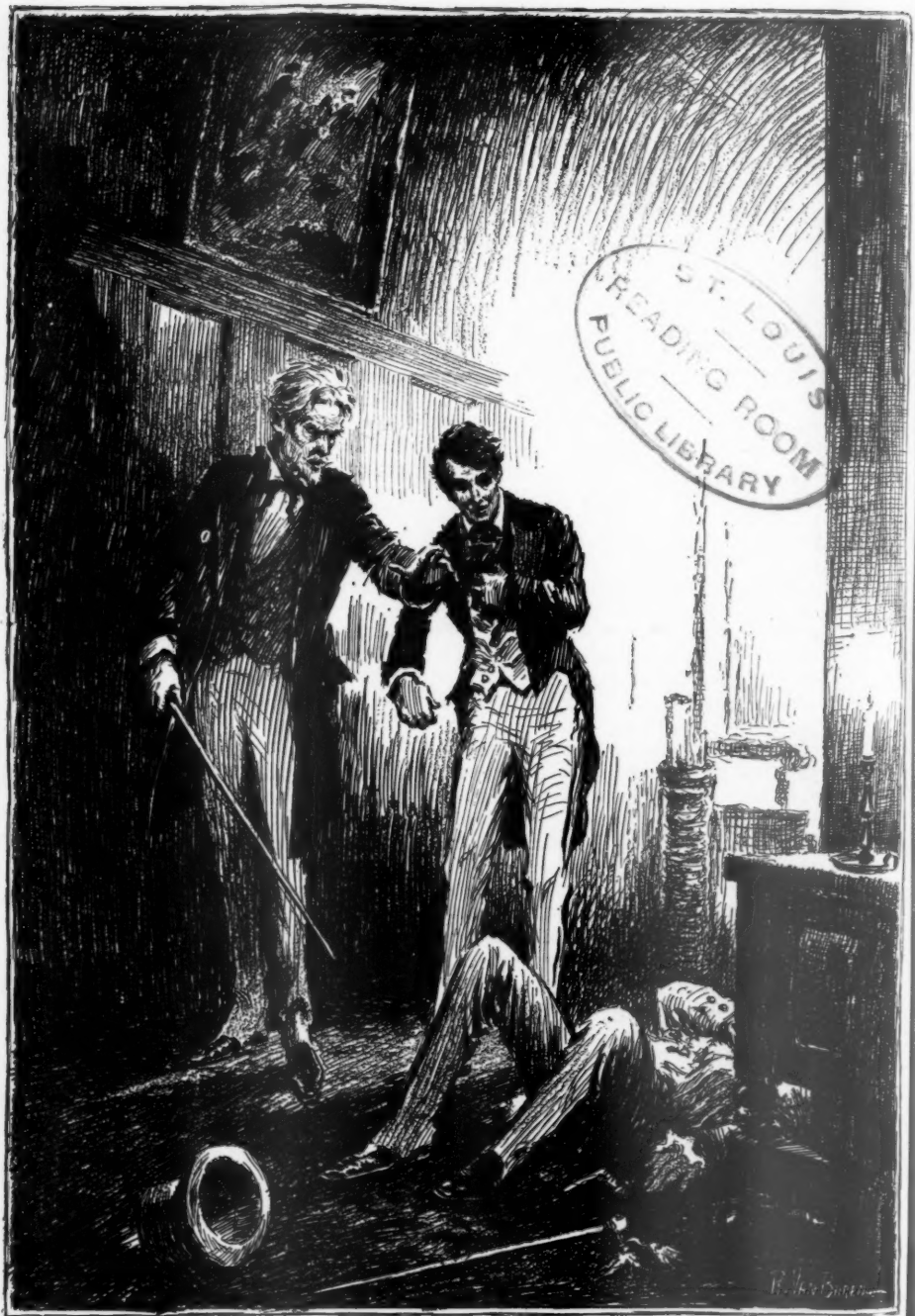
"Major, I hope you don't think there is any mystery about—"

"Don't get scared, Willie. Why should there be any mystery? You see how fondly the Colonel and his wife love her, and where there's mystery, only one party loves, you know."

They walked in silence, the Major musing, and then saying aloud: "Six hundred—yes, a fair interest, I take it. William, I think we, each of us, ought to deposit a respectable sum in the bank here to give us standing. Meantime I'll throw out a hint that we are looking for an investment. Nothing flatters a Southerner so much as the thought that you might invest in his town. He has all the respectability and looks to you for the money."

"Major, if a man were as careful of a legitimate business as we are of our schemes, water it and tend it as well, he would surely become a mighty man of finance."

"Yes, Willie, but who save a plodder wishes to subject his creative soul to the drag and the dust of so-called legitimate business? Business—h'm! . . . Six hundred! We cross over here."



The Major whacked his enemy a blow on the head and laid him sprawling on the floor.

THE club-house was an old mansion sinking into decay. The game was held in an immense room, the walls decorated with fading foxes, dogs and men galloping on what once might have been taken for fiery horses. Three old mahogany round tables served the gamblers, and business was in such blast that it was some time before seats could be provided for the distinguished Major and his friend. The master of ceremonies was a tall, lank fellow with a scar ranging from his right eye down to his chin that suggested that on a former occasion some one had made rather a successful slash at him with a Bowie-knife. He was exceedingly polite, soft-footed as a cat, and as if proud of his unnatural walk, took many unnecessary steps in conducting visitors to the sideboard where drinks were served. While the Major was sipping a brandy smash and Hawkins the sparkling juice of France, Catfoot breathed low but audibly the hope that they would stay to midnight supper, a meal fast achieving fame throughout the civilized world.

"And to-night, sir," said he, bowing to the Major's uniform, "we have a bear from the cane-brakes, roasted whole and brought to the table wrapped in his own hide. It's a sight worth seeing, I tell you; and the meat!"

He smacked his mouth, but his ugly scar mixing with it, robbed it of zestful suggestion; and when he had turned about to greet a newcomer, the Major said to Hawkins: "They ought to hire a cleaner countenance to do their mouth-smacking. Bear! Who the devil wants bear! I want poker."

The game proved to be liberal enough, and with young suckers and old fools, easy enough. It was a game where a little luck added to the wisdom of experience cut a broad swath, and the reaping had netted the Major and Hawkins something more than seven hundred dollars when the midnight supper was called. From time to time Hawkins had noticed a spare man, wearing a tall, white plug hat, walking up and down the room. He had noticed him the more from the fact that in passing the table he had come close to the players in an annoying fashion; and Hawkins had

observed, too, that the Major, bestowing a hard and lingering look, had paid him no further attention. The spare man carried a yellow cane, two bronze tassels dangling beneath its head of gold. The rest of the players scampered eagerly to supper, but the Major and Hawkins, late from a feast of baked shote and cloved ham, passed up the invitation to gorge on bear, even though it were cunningly reënveloped in its own hide. Catfoot was not so much disappointed as they had fancied he might be. He simply said: "All right, boys. Reckon, then, you'd better have something more to drink."

Having for some time been cheated of ceremony, the Major bowed it now, and had turned toward the sideboard when the spare man stepped in front of him. "I suppose, sir, that you recall me," he said, his mouth hard-set.

HAWKINS knew that something was up, for the Major's glance into the spare man's countenance was like the throwing of a javelin.

"I believe, sir, that with an effort I might possibly bring you back to mind."

"I will make your effort easier for you. I am Albert Ferguson."

"Ah," made answer the Major, "I thank you for your assistance. And if in your kindly proffered aid you have not led me astray, the last time I met you was at a reception in Shreveport when—"

With a snap the spare man seemed to bite off the Major's sentence.

"When you called me a damned scoundrel, sir."

Again the Major bowed. "I am pleased, sir, that you recall my having uttered a truth."

The tall hat bowed. "There were ladies present, the occasion unsuited, and it was not meet—"

"A good biblical word. There ought to be more of such coin in our circulating medium," the Major interrupted him, and with a smile like a flame licking out through a crack in a stove.

The tall hat acknowledged the compliment. "I said that I would meet you again; and so I have, though the time has been rather long. I am on my way

up the River, sir. Our captain saw fit to tie up here for the night. I grumbled against the delay, but now I find that I shall have cause to thank him."

"And please add my thanks to your own."

"I shall do so, sir. By the way, Mr. Pewitt—"

"Major, sir."

"By the way, Mr. Pewitt, we might attract attention here. The hall is spacious and remote. Will you please to step out there and repeat what you uttered in Shreveport?"

"I follow you, sir."

Now Hawkins, knowing that something was up indeed, walked close behind them out into the hall. The hat looked at the intruder, and the Major spoke: "I hope you have no objections to my young friend. He is judicious and knows how to keep quiet."

The white hat bowed to Hawkins, and knowing that the Major was not armed, he deplored the advantage of the spare man's heavy cane; and upon this unfairness he was about to remark, when the Major, reading his mind, shut him off with a gesture. Then he turned to Mr. Ferguson, who stood facing him in an attitude of such dignity that no one could look upon him as merely a tall hat, though he still wore it.

"Now, sir, will you please be so kind as to repeat what you said to me in Shreveport?"

"Ah, with pleasure, sir. But permit me, for the sake of accuracy, to reproduce the picture in my mind. We were standing near the sideboard."

"Exactly," Mr. Ferguson agreed.

"And there passed through the room a Mrs. Jorbin, the wife of a steamboat captain."

"The woman of a steamboat captain named Blivin," Ferguson corrected him.

THE Major inclined his head. "The woman, yes; but the lady of the house at which we were entertained believed that she was the wife of the captain, whatever his name may have been. I said as much, and you remarked that it would make no difference to our hostess whether she did or not. Then I called you a damned scoundrel."

Into the air flew the cane, and down came a blow aimed at the Major's head. But he caught the stick with his right hand. Backward Ferguson sprang and with a quick jerk snatched from the cane a long and glittering rapier, and flourished it in the Major's countenance. At this moment Hawkins would not have wagered a penny on his friend's life; but determined to prevent murder, he had forced himself in between them when the Major, still holding the cane, the sword's scabbard, in his hand, cried out:

"Back there, Bill! Leave him to me."

And with that he attacked Ferguson with the cane. Now came a fight such as Hawkins had never seen before, a battle between a sword and its sheath; and the youngster stood thrilled with delight at the Major's skill. What a fencer he was! He parried each thrust. Up he knocked the rapier and gave Ferguson a mighty punch. He turned a vicious thrust, and away went the tall hat rolling on the floor; and then with a quickness no one could have conceived of him, he whacked his enemy a blow on the head that laid him sprawling on the floor. Hawkins cried out in his glee, but the Major reproved him.

"Quiet, Willie! Ah, my son, before taking the presidency of that female college, I was a fencing master in New Orleans." He touched his enemy with his foot. "Rather a subdued picture, William."

Except with heavy breathing, Ferguson did not move. The Major took up the rapier, broke it, fitted the pieces into the scabbard, adjusted the gold head, and then opening the door, called aloud:

"Bring a mop here, some of you niggers. A gentleman is bleeding on the carpet."

This announcement was startling enough to cause a commotion at the supper table, and out came running the bear-eaters, knocking over chairs and bumping against tables. At nearly all poker games a doctor is present, and now one came forth and began to inspect Mr. Ferguson.

"How did it happen?" some one inquired.

The Major offered enlightenment:

"Why, sir, in a most peculiar manner. For my edification the gentleman was dancing a jig, and he slipped, fell and hurt himself."

The gamblers glanced slyly at one another. No one relishes a summons to bear testimony of bloodshed in a gambling-house, and the Major's explanation was winkingly accepted.

They put Mr. Ferguson on a sofa, and soon he was able to sit up and to look about him in a dazed sort of way, but he spoke no word, blinking slowly as if unaccustomed to the light.

The Major spoke to the doctor. "You may send your bill to me—Major Pewitt, sir."

The physician thanked him. "A relative of yours, Major?"

"Well, no, sir, not exactly, but we have been closely associated."

Ferguson began to mutter something about his boat.

"Ah, yes," spoke the Major, "call a cab. And Doctor, if you will attend him to the levee and see that he is properly housed in his stateroom I shall esteem it a favor, sir."

NEXT day the Major and Hawkins called at the bank. For they had garnered about a thousand dollars the evening before, and the Major thought it wise to deposit the money and so establish their credit in the community.

At the bank Hawkins was treated to something in the nature of a gasp. Early in the fifties the elder Hawkins had deposited ten thousand dollars with a banker, Solomon Vertrees, in Williamsburg, Virginia. The money had been accepted by him about two in the afternoon. On the following morning a notice had been posted announcing that payment was suspended. Mr. Vertrees had been sorry, so ill, indeed, over the failure that he had gone to bed and remained there for a week. Then he had sneaked away. This Natchez banker was the man. But Hawkins deposited two thousand dollars with him. The Major had noticed that his friend was somewhat agitated. He said nothing on the way to the hotel, but when Hawkins had gone to his room with him, he remarked:

"William, you should never be excited in the presence of capital. Treat money with respect; tip your hat to it, but don't tremble."

Hawkins explained, and for a long time the Major walked up and down the room. At length he halted.

"William, under no consideration must you remind Mr. Vertrees of that transaction years ago. If he should feel about to find out whether or not you are the son of Riddleton J. Hawkins, slyly assure him that you are not. Don't ask my reasons now. I will give them when I have communed a little with myself."

Hawkins wondered why he should make such a request, but promised to put no question. He went out alone, while the Major was taking his afternoon nap, and stole off to the neighborhood of the old Colonel's home. That he would at any time be welcome he knew, but he felt a peculiar timidity, a sort of delicious dread, as the big iron gate arose into view, grim and formidable; and he began to skulk the outskirts of the spacious yard.

Sauntering to the rear among the negro cabins, Hawkins saw a suffragette meeting of guinea-hens break up in a row, and farther on around toward the right-hand turn of an old wooden fence, an enormous turkey gobbler marked on the ground with a stiffened wing and dared the thief to cross the line. Hawkins had no intention of doing so; an invasion of the premises was far from any of his forecastings. He was simply out for a walk in the sweet and magnolia-heavied air; and really it had been a surprise to find himself so near the Colonel's home. But who was the girl, romping with a white rabbit? How her flounces fluttered, and what thrilling glimpses he caught of her, whoever she might be! Once the rabbit stopped suddenly, and to avoid running over him she stumbled and fell, but so gracefully did she accomplish it that the thief wished she might do it again. Now the rabbit came running toward him; and she, warm and flushed, came close upon his velvety heels; but through the fence he slipped. Hawkins caught him, held him up; and what a surprise! The girl was Cisne.

"Oh, thank you so much," she cried, taking her pet over the fence. "But for you I might never have seen him again."

AGAINST the envied rabbit's fur she laid her cheek, and then setting him down, gave him a gentle shove toward the house.

"But what are you doing walking round here? Why don't you come in?"

"Why, the fact is I didn't know I was here. I mean I didn't recognize the house."

Now they were walking slowly around toward the big iron gate. She asked if he didn't know her the moment he saw her.

"Yes, but I didn't see you until some time after you fell."

She laughed at him, and a thought flew through his mind: "What nonsense it is to speak of a dark flame, as if flame is not light itself. I wish, though, there were such a thing as a dark flame. It would tell of the expression of your eyes as you looked at me through the bars of the fence."

"Why, if you didn't see me, weren't watching me, how do you know I fell?"

A laugh is an answer to anything. Give to youth an opportunity to laugh, and it will turn all of old Whateley's logic to ashes and blow them away. Hawkins laughed, and Cisne laughed, and the rabbit came leaping back to stare at them with his pink eyes. What a marvelous dress she wore—calico, he supposed, exquisitely cream-colored and with roses stamped all over it! In her hair blazed the bloom of a Virginia creeper, and how she had established with it an understanding that it should remain firmly fixed, defying her romp and her tumble, was a mystery. How glad he was to find defects about her! Her upper lip was almost too short, her nose a little too much inclined to turn up; and he mused in his heart that he was pleased, knowing that in these blemishes lay his protection against her unconscious wiles.

Out to the gate came the Colonel, accompanying a man whom Hawkins took to be a lawyer, with his coat pocket bulging with blank mortgages. They parted so solemnly that the business must have

been "legal;" and then the old gentleman turned toward Hawkins: "Why, bless me if it isn't our young friend. Come in. I have just received a consignment of—I might say most eloquent mint, sir, from a bed on an old plantation owned at one time by Prentiss, the world's greatest orator. We were talking about you gentlemen this morning, and we decided to ask a favor of you, the pleasure of your company at dinner, tomorrow at noon. Ah, but I observe that the Major is not with you."

"No, but I can answer for him." Here Hawkins halted to make a bow in imitation of his friend. "We gratefully accept."

Then Cisne: "Surely you do."

It was not in the Colonel's nature to reprove her, but he could laugh off what might appear to be impertinent on her part, and he did, she laughing with him, coquettish with Hawkins, plucking at his sleeve.

THE mint was eloquent, the liquor oratorical, for the Colonel warmed up and told about the past while Cisne hemmed and yawned. And when the old gentleman had turned about to attend upon an interruption imposed by the black deacon she whispered to Hawkins:

"You know you don't like that old stuff. Goodness, I get so tired of it!"

"But you mustn't," Hawkins weakly protested.

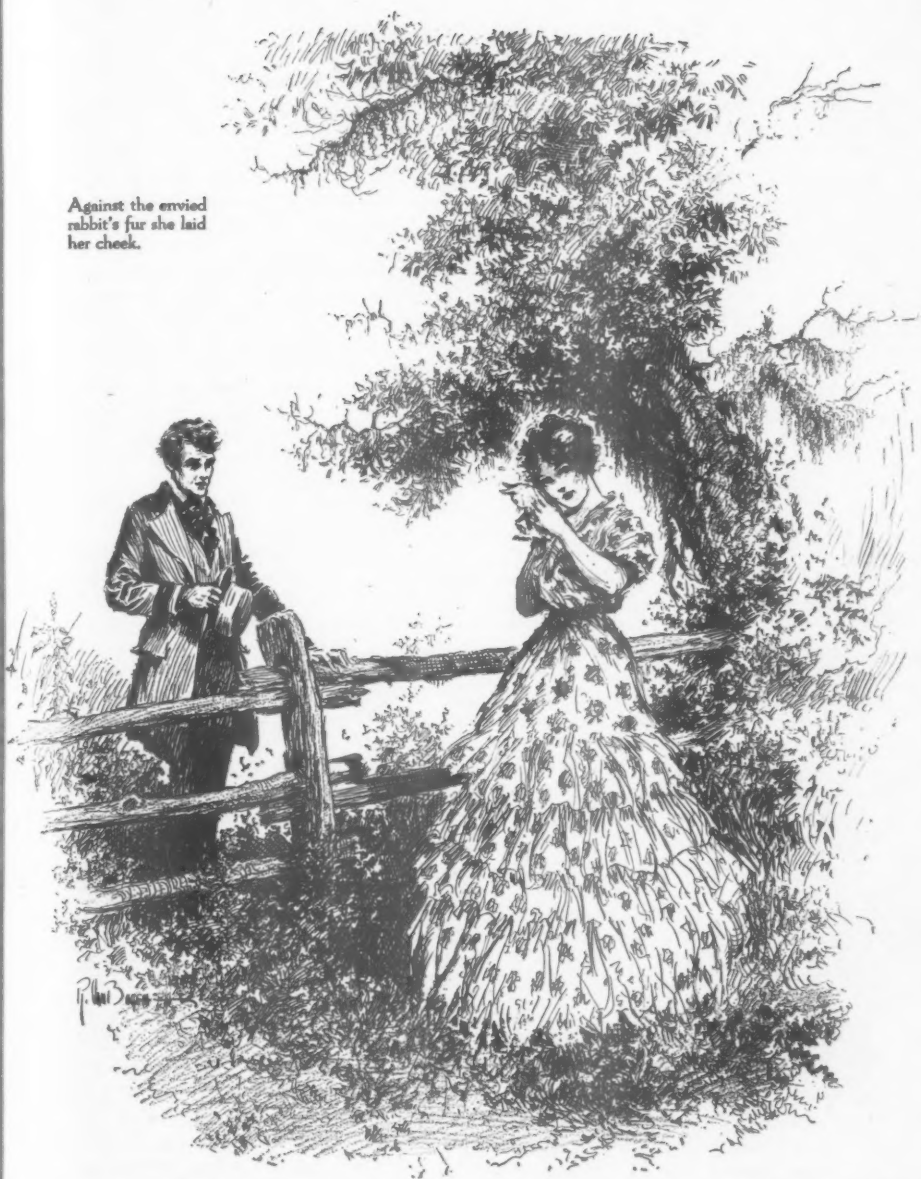
"Why do you say that when you know you don't mean it? You don't like it, do you?"

"Well, my appetite is not so keen for it that I don't know when I've got enough."

She gleeed at him—at least that's the way he described to himself her look. And then: "There came a play here not long ago, the first I ever saw; and although it was wicked, they let me go, and it was the sweetest thing! I cried nearly all the time and was so glad to cry that I cried more—the 'Lady of Lyons;' you must have seen it; and I would like to see it every night as long as I live. I'd just like to play in it. Oh!" She hugged herself.

Mrs. Pemberton came in, glad to welcome Hawkins, but flustered with the

Against the envied
rabbit's fur she laid
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excitement of having seen a hawk fly away with a guinea pullet; and in spite of a restraint that the old gentleman strove to put upon himself, he laughed, turning it off with a pretended sneeze.

Cisne was tingling to tell Hawkins about "The Lady of Lyons," but they gave her no chance; indeed, the mother

requested her to give an account of life at Miss Holbrook's school for young ladies, which from the girl herself would have been interesting enough but which from the old lady, who proceeded at once to enter upon the narration, was as thrilling to Hawkins as Virtue's advice to the wayward. The man who draws

cards and dreams of straight flushes soon feeds full on family life, and remembering conveniently that he had an engagement with the Major and doubtless with a minister who might accompany him, Hawkins now took his leave.

HAWKINS found the Major waiting for him, flouting a newspaper, and rather peevish. "William, where the devil have you been? Didn't you know we might have important business?"

"Do you transact important business while taking a nap?"

"Willie, you got me there. Oh, when it comes to wit they can't down you. I don't mean the flimsy repartee of society; I mean the wit of logic. Sit down. I want to talk to you."

He moved over to assure himself that the door was closed, and then sat down in front of Hawkins, looking at him hard and appealingly.

"Billiam, life has its recompenses."

"Yes, I know that. But what is it you really mean to say?"

"Ha! I am going to say something indeed, and you mustn't oppose a word or even flinch till I have finished my argument. . . . I told you that you must not make yourself known to Vertrees, the banker. I told you that I could not at the moment give you my reason. And why? Because something was forming in my mind. That something is now completely formed. William, that man owes you ten thousand dollars. He owes you ten thousand dollars with interest for a number of years."

He leaned over and spread his hands on Hawkins' knees. "William, you must have that money."

"Yes, I'd like to have it, but will he give it to me?"

"Give it to you! Did he give it to your father? Do you expect him to come in here and hand it to you, perfumed and tied with a ribbon? You may wager your existence that he won't give it to you."

"Then how am I to get it?"

He cleared his throat. "When a man takes what belongs to him, it is not a crime."

"What! You don't mean that I am to rob the bank?"

"Don't, eh? Why not?"

"Good Lord, Major, you can't mean that."

"Can't I? Am I a man of justice, or am I a fool? When Vertrees took your father's money just before closing the bank, he knew that he was crooked. He knew that he was going to suspend payment the next day. He didn't have the courage to be a robber outright. He was only a thief. . . . I went around there just now—haven't been napping all the time—went around and made a casual inspection. It won't be hard to get into the place, and with a slight puff of gunpowder, there's your money spread out like a fan. There may be more than ten thousand. If there is, take it, for you'll not have time to stand there counting. Vertrees would have taken twenty thousand if your father had offered it to him, just as he took the ten. He was there to take. And besides, look at the interest he owes you. William, will you get that money?"

"Major, I think the world of you. Not a man on the earth could exert over me the influence you do. You are the bravest man I ever saw, and to me bravery is the brightest virtue. I would fight for you, lie for you, play highwayman in a poker game for you. But I am not a bank-robber."

"Thank you, Willie. But when a man robs you and puts your money in his own bank, haven't you the right to go and get it?"

"Not unless he refuses to give it to me, and he hasn't been asked yet."

"And he wouldn't give it to you even if you were to get down on your knees and weep for it. But I see that a sweet wave of reform has swept over you. You met a black kitten and fell in love."

ARISEING with a jerk, he walked about the room. Then he halted, and with finger up stood silent in front of Hawkins. He sat down:

"Just at a time when your prospects are brightest, you obscure them with love. Just when you ought to be strongest, you exhibit yourself weakest. You shut your eyes and stumble into a trap. Let me tell you something: Man is at his feeblest when he falls in love. You

read about man being reformed by women, but let me assure you that the man who is not strong enough to reform himself is a ninny. Shameless falsifiers of truth will tell you that woman is the stimulus of man's greatest achievement, when the fact is that when a man's after a woman everything else is for a time incidental. He's mad; and his bite would poison you like the snap of a hydrophobic hound."

Again he spread his hands on Hawkins' knees. He was breathing hard, and beads of sweat like gleaming warts stood on his brow.

"Major, your discourse is interesting, but before you exert yourself to dig up further argument, let me assure you that I have not the slightest notion of falling in love."

The Major gripped Hawkins' knees, his eyes aglow with returning confidence in himself, the power in which he held the youth. "Now you talk like William Hawkins, the brave, the hero. Now you are your father's son and will avenge the stain put on his memory."

"But no stain has been—"

"Oh, I know all about that." And with both hands he cut impatient scallops in the air. "No stain on his memory when that banker played him for a sucker? Isn't that stain enough? Isn't it stain enough when a man looks at you and sizes you up for a sheep? Suppose your father had owed ten thousand dollars and had promised to pay it within ten days? Wouldn't it have been stain enough if, on account of that banker, he failed to keep his word?"

"Yes, that is all true enough."

"Ah, I am glad you realize it. . . . Now let me see: That bank ought to be worth to us—say twenty thousand. Isn't that a conservative estimate?"

Hawkins agreeing that the estimate was conservative enough, the Major thanked him, arose and began a meditative stroll up and down the room.

"The most beautiful flower that ever bloomed, William, the reddest and most genuine, is the flower of revenge. Lord Bacon, perhaps the greatest lawyer that ever lived, declared revenge to be a sort of wild justice. . . . Yes, twenty thousand, which, with our present

capital, will yield enough to buy a couple of sugar plantations, and then we'll live like kings; and then, if you feel so disposed, you may fall in love—with a woman of means."

"But I haven't decided about the bank."

"The devil you haven't! I thought you had. When will you decide?"

"To-morrow night. Remember that you required time before you could even explain your scheme."

"That's true. And I don't complain. Good! We'll settle it to-morrow night. . . . Twenty thousand."

AT dinner next day Hawkins expected to be introduced to another shote that couldn't "outrun a nigger," and to a cloved ham, but instead there was a great fry of young squirrels; and in good spirits they feasted, the Colonel and the Major discoursing, and Hawkins congratulating himself that the girl's upper lip was so short. After dinner, when the Colonel settled into droning reminiscence, Cisne left off her yawning and asked Hawkins to go out into the yard with her, to help her play with the white rabbit. But they couldn't find the rabbit, which the young fellow feared would greatly distress her, but it didn't, for resignedly she sat down on a sort of sofa, made of grapevines, inviting him to sit beside her; there they sat, listening to the melodies of nature; and after a lingering time, returning to the house, she hung on his arm, delighted that they were so well acquainted.

The Major was gone. A friend had called for him, and Hawkins was not sorry, though he pretended to be; but he was grieved a few moments later when two girls came in a pony cart and took Cisne for a ride. Mrs. Pemberton went out in town to buy slippers for the minister, and now it was that the Colonel and Hawkins were left alone. As the young fellow looked at him, his heart more than ever smote him, so mellowed with gentleness was this old planter. "And to think that I robbed him," Hawkins mused. And the culprit must have blushed, for the Colonel asked if he found the room too warm.

"My young friend, there is something that I wish to tell you."

Hawkins bowed and acknowledged to himself: "There is something that I wish to tell you, too."

CLOSER he moved his chair. Hawkins waited. Looking at him steadily, the old gentleman began: "Years ago a Frenchman named La Ponte took occasion to insult me. I smacked his jaws, sir, and he challenged me. This was in New Orleans. I chose pistols. We met beneath the Oakes. I shot his brains out, sir. And then a great remorse fell upon me, not because I had killed him, for I had to, but because he had left a motherless girl, only three years old. Cisne is that girl, Mr. Hawkins. My wife and I adopted her, and then we removed to this town. The neighbors know nothing, and Cisne has never been told."

Hawkins gazed at him, closing his mouth with an effort, wondering why he should have been taken into the family's confidence.

"I wanted you to know, Mr. Hawkins."

And now came Hawkins' time.

"Colonel, I thank you, sir. Naturally I ask myself why so carefully a kept secret should have been revealed to me, but—"

"Mr. Hawkins, old eyes are sometimes keen. Old hearts may beat warm with intuition."

Hawkins felt that all the air had turned red. There was naught that he could say, and he broke not the silence that now fell upon the room, upon the world; he sat downcast of eye till a determined aim flew to his mind.

"Colonel, please answer me this: how much money did you have in front of you at the time of the robbery on the steamer *Black Hawk*?"

"Eleven hundred or thereabouts. But why, sir?"

Hawkins counted out eleven hundred dollars, the old man gazing in silent astonishment.

"Colonel, this money belongs to you."

"I insist upon knowing why, sir."

"It belongs to you because the robber returns it."

"What!"

"Colonel, I was the robber."

In getting out of his chair the old man overturned it; and now he fumbled about to catch hold of something to stay him. "You!"

"Yes; but let me assure you that the Major knows nothing about it."

Slowly he took the money, and it shook in his hand. "This is rightly mine, but I am deeply sorry to receive it. I wish you hadn't told me, sir. I wish to God—Mr. Hawkins, will you please walk out into the air with me?"

He led the way to the big iron gate, speaking not a word till they had passed out; and when with an effort he had closed the gate behind them, he bent upon the young man a look of sorrowing kindness.

"Mr. Hawkins, I cannot believe that a man of your family and your instincts is a criminal. In some way, sir, you must be under the influence of a stronger mind. Your provocation was great, no doubt; but honesty is a delicate flower, sir. I must bid you good-by."

THE Major was in Hawkins' room, waiting for him.

"Ha, Billy. I have just been musing over what a brave and gallant fellow you are. No ancient Greek was ever so just. And surely you will be just to your father's memory. Therefore, your answer, William. That bank—"

"Major, just now I heard a wise and noble old man say: 'Honesty is a delicate flower.' And I might add, 'Bank-robbery is a most pernicious thistle.' Major, I leave for New Orleans to-night."

These stories have the réal flavor of the romantic old South: witness the character of Colonel Pemberton, who would kill a man in a duel, and then adopt his opponent's daughter, and who would not break off his friendship with Hawkins within his own gates. There will be another of the stories in the May issue, on the news-stands April 22nd.

THE breezily told story of Egbert Elwood Parrish, who was slender and tall, had a pompadour, small hands and feet, "patrician" features, and two dimples, but who certainly was a puzzle in love and baseball.



Faint Heart And Fair Lady

By Octavus Roy Cohen

Author of "Common Sense," etc.

GIVEN the name Egbert Elwood Parrish, a slender figure running something like five feet and nine and one half inches from the ground to the peak of a pompadour, features that usually get written up as "patrician," small, uncalledoused hands, feet that wear fives on a C last with comfort, clothes that look like a haberdashery advertisement, and two dimples—what do you expect to see it doing?

Singing tenor in a choir, of course, or keeping books in a wholesale hardware house, or acting in the chorus of a lady-like musical comedy, or floor-walking along Sixth Avenue. All those are reasonable guesses, but they're all wrong.

Egbert Elwood Parrish played ball for a living, and last year three of the best sport-writers in the country picked

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. C. LONSBURY

him as the all-star second baseman. Of course that's a joke, as I know, and as

every other member of the team knows. But there are the records—batting average .321, and fielding average .963—which can't be got around. Maybe figures don't lie, but they sure stretch a point now and then.

From what I've gathered here and there, I understand that Egbert has been a continuous disappointment to his parents. His baby-book—colored blue, for they wanted a girl—indicates that his first remark was "damn" and that his first adventure on the troubled seas of life came within an ace of costing the family cat its left eye. Thereafter, by all the dope, Egbert simmered down and became a model son—with a few exceptions.

Exception One was when he consigned

his nurse to the lower regions, he being then six years of age but appallingly positive in his language. Exception Two occurred at eleven, when fond parents discovered that he had played "hookey" for about half the school term. Exception Three came at the age of sixteen, during the freshman year at college, when a frantic father narrowly averted an elopement in which his son and a pulchritudinous chorus girl had planned to be the principals. As Egbert explained that episode, he was able to pass for twenty-one at sixteen as easily as at twenty-four. Exception Four resulted in the development of ability as a ball-player, a shifting from a theological to an engineering course, and a sustained interest in anything wearing skirts.

Exception Five nearly finished the doting progenitors of Egbert. He signed a contract with the Cormorants, by which he was to play second base and receive therefor an honorarium of two thousand and five hundred dollars annually. To use the vernacular, Egbert had been quite some shakes as a college ball-tosser.

When the boys heard he was slated for the big gap in our infield, commencing with the close of the college season, (he'd taken two post-graduate years just to satisfy the desires of his parents and the need of the college for a crack infielder), they commenced to look him up. First of all they couldn't exactly swallow the name, and with the usual bluntness of professionals it was unanimously agreed that he should be named Egg—prefix to be determined by future performance. So as Egg he joined us, and as Egg he remained.

Somehow, from what I had gathered, I expected Egg to turn out a little village cut-up. I was disappointed. Maybe it's because collegers and professional ball-players are different breeds of animal, and tricks which look good to the rah-rah boys don't shine so with veterans at the game of joshing. Anyway, he rambled in on us one morning when we were lounging around the hotel lobby, spick and span and looking for all the world like a bridegroom-to-be.

He knocked himself down to me, and me to the others—and he blushed. Imag-

ine a ball-player blushing without liquid inducement! There wasn't a doubt in the world about it; he was modest until he was scared. And that afternoon on the field he made about twenty bobbles in twenty chances—during practice. I knew better than to sling him right into the game. Bench-warming for a week or so, and then a trial. Next day he made about two errors in practice, and after that—like the leading characters in a certain play I saw the other day, would express it—"errors was nix."

He got into the game at second, and thereafter Joe Freeman, who'd been tried out, lost all hope of becoming a regular. From his début, Egg shone and he kept on shining.

You'd think that that would shelve his modesty and make him a little cocky, eh—especially after six years of college? Nothing doing. He was trying to learn all the time and begging pointers from fellows who weren't in his class as ball-players—and looking like such a simp the boys took a delight in kidding him along. One thing they did that got my goat was to scare the kid by telling him the one thing that would make me wild was to have a "bone" pulled on the field. That was true, all right, all right, but the kid would have learned it the first time it happened—and the result of their guying was that he was so scared of doing something wrong that he didn't do as much that was right as he could have.

Honest, we'd have to give him directions when he was going to bat about what length hit we wanted—sacrifice, single, double, triple or home run—not that he produced on all occasions, but the boob tried his best to answer to specifications. It got to be uncanny the way he'd ask for instructions. I mind one day when he was up first with no one down and he asked what I wanted.

"Home run," I snaps.

He taps his bat on the plate and lam-basts the first ball on a bee-line for eternity. I don't know whether they ever got it, but the river wasn't but a mile away and I kind of think it might have been swept out to sea. Next time he comes to bat there was a man on first and no one down.

He rambled in on us one morning, looking for all the world like a bridegroom-to-be.



I says curtly. Then I forgot about it. And next time up he lands on the ball—phew! it looked like a comet traveling toward the center-field fence. And it would have been a homer if Birdie Cree hadn't crossed lots and made a barehand stab that set the crowd plumb crazy.

That was the trouble with the kid, though. He took things too literally. He seemed to have lost all his spirit when he jumped into the majors. He did whatever he was told, and what he wasn't told he let strictly alone. Conservative? Man alive! he was reactionary.

Same way with him when the girl—but let me start at the beginning.

DURING the winter, to get off right, Sam Tarrant, our first baseman, had taken a flyer in vaudeville, and had hitched unto himself two damsels for the trip around the Big Time. The act, as I remember it, had been billed "SAM TARRANT, THE FAMOUS BALL-PLAYER, AND THE SISTERS VAN DYKE." That was all right when they started out on the road playing week engagements, because Maude and Janet really were sisters, but the name was a little off when they'd been yowling and prancing behind the footlights for a month, because while Maude and Janet remained sisters, the former took unto herself a lawfully wedded husband, Sam Tarrant.

"Sacrifice," I orders, and he does it strictly according to order. It seemed to me, though, that he might've beaten the bunt to first. I told him so, and the way he looked at me struck me as a little peculiar—a sort of twinkle in his eye.

"You said sacrifice," he asseverated, "and it aint a sacrifice unless the batter gets out."

Maybe he was serious; maybe he was trying to kid me. I don't know. Anyway, "Make another homer next time up!"

It kind of threw the hooks into the team of the Sisters Van Dyke. It seems that they'd been playing double for years and putting on a dancing act that just simply couldn't go single. And of course the blushing bride wasn't hankering on tearing away from her husband. So when he reports at the spring training-camp, she reports with him, and the pair of 'em trot Janet, the unmarried one, along with 'em.

Every man to his taste, say I, and I'm criticising nobody, and aint saying but what Mrs. Sam Tarrant mightn't have had the Venus de Milo and September Morn and the Mona Lisa and all those famous beauties beaten several lengths when it came to the real thing—but just mentioning things casually and not knowing either very well, I can't see how he passed up Janet for Maude.

Maude was queenly, but Janet was more shapely. Maude had golden hair, and Janet had wavy golden hair. Maude—but what's the use of giving the Bertillions? Janet was my pick, and I'll say that boldly, even though Sam is bigger than I am and will probably read this. A man ought to have the courage of his convictions—that's what I say—even if it's a life term.

Don't get me wrong, though. I wasn't falling in love with Janet. Maybe my wife wouldn't have liked it. But the idea I'm trying to shove across is that Janet was there—face, figure, clothes and talk.

She wasn't any too wise to the official playing rules, but she knew enough about the game to flatter us on good plays and to inspire us to better efforts by her coolness when a bone threw away a game. And what she did to enliven the tedium of that training camp! Man, she and her sister sang for us and danced and taught us seventeen new steps of the fox-trot and explained to us how it had been standardized. And of course, every man-jack of the crowd not then tied or mortgaged by the ring route proffered his hand in marriage.

That's where Connie Stewart comes into the story. Connie was field captain and shortstop—about the height of Maranville and, to my mind, as good in the short field as Hans Wagner was in his

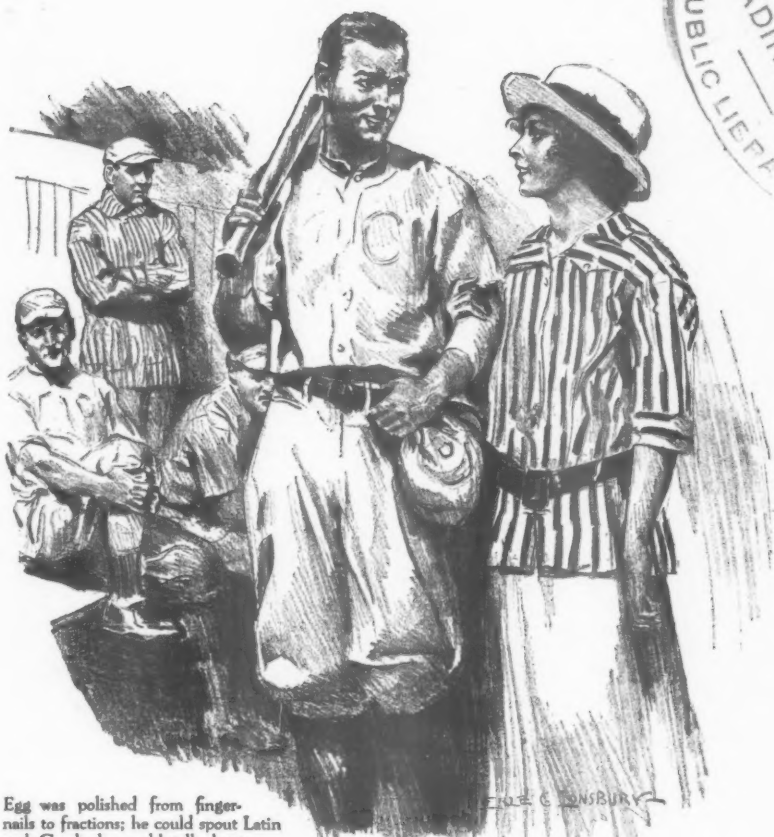
palmy days. Furthermore, Connie was brimful of fun, sparkling with repartee, full of pep and a general good fellow. By the time we opened up the season, the rest of the boys were laying back to give Connie a free road to Janet's hand and heart and a four-room-and-bath apartment during the off season.

Connie was what the writer chaps call a diamond in the rough. He wasn't overburdened with education, thought Shakespeare was a play written by Robert Mantell, that Rome was a Class D town in Georgia (and he didn't blame Nero for fiddling when it burned, seeing that we trained there one season), that Reciprocity had something to do with the Federal League and that the principal duty of the mayor of a city was to toss the first ball at the opening of the league season.

At that, he got along; and it looked to us as though Janet would do pretty well to enter the matrimonial handicap as a stable entry with Connie. He was raking down five thousand of the In-God-We-Trust stuff for a season's play, had invested with instinctive sagacity in suburban real estate, and didn't look like he was ever going to visit the poorhouse except as a Sustaining Member of the Board.

So everything was chicken until the close of the college season, when Egg joined the team and supplanted Freeman on second base. Egg, as I have mentioned a couple of times, was polished from finger-nails to fractions; he could spout Latin and Greek just as natural as a dago; he could talk—and would if you got after him hard enough—about anything from Epictetus down to the war. Egg just naturally dazzled Janet Van Dyke, and she handed Connie his *congé* (whatever that means!) three days after Egg showed up.

It was funny about that, too. It seems that when the boys commenced their stringing of the new man—that's as customary as hazing a freshman at college—Connie sort of took the lead. Egg took it all in and didn't say much in answer, and did all the ridiculous things they put up to him, and didn't seem to get mad. And then, as I get it, Janet undertook to champion the newcomer.



Egg was polished from finger-nails to fractions; he could spout Latin and Greek; he could talk about anything from Epictetus down to the war.

Egg just naturally dazzled Janet Van Dyke.

Connie has since told me that she cornered him and took him to task for tantalizing Egg.

"He's an intellectual gentleman," Connie says she said, "and you shouldn't embarrass him that way."

So of course Connie sees the handwriting on the wall and knows that he's got a new rival. Not that it makes Connie sore,—he aint that kind,—but it kind of gets his goat to know that the education of Egg is what puts him out of the race, when there aint a chance of him catching up before Egg and Janet have been married ten years or so.

I kind of hinted to Connie that maybe he was jumping at conclusions, but he leads me to the window and points to the park across the street from the hotel.

There on the bench was sitting Janet, Egg and a book. It looked to me as though he was reading to her.

"She's got the culture bug," says Connie lugubriously. "He's spouting po'try by the yard, just sloppin' over with it. And she's fallin' for it, Jim, she's fallin' for it—hard!"

"Mightn't you try—"

"Me? Po'try? High-brow stuff? Honest, Jim, sometimes you don't talk with the common sense of a jackass."

"But I don't see—"

"Of course you don't. I never expected you to. You don't know nothin' about modern love. You been married three years, and styles change mighty fast."

"Maybe so, Connie. Maybe so. But

you sure aint gonna drop out of the race?"

"Drop out," he says bitterly. "No, Jim, I aint gonna drop out. But I been kicked out—and out I'm gonna stay. When Janet pulls that stuff on me about not kiddin' the colleger, I came back at her with an inquiry to know why he's different from any other rookie, and she says that thing about him being so learned and all that, and I says: 'Well, if you're so interested in him as all that, you're welcome—good day, Miss Van Dyke.'"

"Very tactful, Connie—very tactful. Don't you think you could have helped Egg a little more if you'd proposed to her for him and then loaned him the money for an engagement ring?"

Connie flashed me a suspicious look.

"You kiddin' me?" he inquires. "This is serious business, Jim."

"No, I'm not kiddin' you. You're kiddin' yourself. You stepped in a mud-hole and you think it's quicksand."

"I don't know nothin' about mud-holes and quicksands," says Connie, rising and making for the door, "but I do know that I played thunder when I started kiddin' Egg, and that I'm queered with her for good and that if she's gonna be happier with him than me—why, I say God bless you, my children, an' there y'are!"

THANKS to Egg Parrish, who made good on second and filled up the one gap in our defense, we got away to a flying start and the other clubs contented themselves with chasing us. Of course, the strain aint so bad during the first three months of the race, and being in the lead then don't necessarily insure a first-division place when the final bell sounds, but I couldn't ask any more than the boys were giving me; and so, things going like a well-oiled piece of machinery, I sat down to watch the courtship of Egg Parrish and Janet Van Dyke.

There wasn't a doubt about it; they were the original affinities, if there is any such thing. It was plain as the noses on our faces that Connie Stewart never had a chance after Egg joined the team, and I got to hand it to the runt on the way he took it. Outside of once or twice spill-

in' some bunk in the privacy of his room about anything that made her happy, made him happy, he didn't slop over—for which we were all truly thankful; and his very attitude toward Egg made that second-and-short combination a thing to dream about. Why, all the big sport-writers said Parrish and Stewart made a pair around second that was about as good as Barry and Collins or Tinker and Evers, or any one of a dozen others.

Y'see, they were both square guys, and each of 'em knew that if one forced a bobble onto the other the rest of the bunch would think it was spite or jealousy or something like that, and so they played like fiends. And with Sam Tarrant on first and George Heston on third, we had an infield that was a heap better than a stone wall.

AT the end of three months affairs hadn't progressed a bit, and though Egg was setting the league on fire, he had us worried all the time. Somehow, he didn't have that get-up-and-get in him like he ought to have. We still had to give him directions for everything—and he was still overawed by playing in the majors. And as for the diffident way he courted Janet—well, all I'll say is that grown men don't fulfill the promises they make in their youth. From that sixteen-year-old-elopement proposition and a few college escapades I'd heard of, I imagined Egg was gonna be a Lothario. But honest to goodness, it seemed as though Janet had to do all the courting. It was a shame.

The summer steamed along, and while we didn't lose so many games, it seemed as though the Buccaneers and the Flamingoes had crawled up from nowhere and were ready to jump into first place any old time. I wasn't scared—until I commenced to notice that slowly and surely Egg Parrish's work was falling off. He pulled two bonehead plays in one day; he ran bases heavily; and our percentage started to go down.

I offered him a couple of days' rest but he wouldn't hear of it, and not being a confidential guy, he didn't tell me what was wrong. For two weeks it kept up, and then one day we lost a double-

header to the Flamingoes through ivory-domed work of Parrish's while the Buccaneers were taking a pair of 'em from the Peaches, and we all awakened with a start to face the fact that if we were to win the pennant we had to do something.

There wasn't but one weak spot on the team, and that weak spot was Egg Parrish. Yet even the way he was going, there wasn't a better man to put in his place. But the thing we needed, with two other teams fighting us tooth and nail, wasn't just a good second baseman—we needed a star second-sacker, the kind of a player Egg was when he was going right.

ON one point every man of us agreed. That was that the whole trouble lay in Janet. I cornered Connie, him knowing her plenty well, and asked him about it.

"I don't know nothin'," he says slowly, "except that they're dead in love with each other. What's the trouble I can't see. Seems to me like it'd be better if they were married—that is, better for the team."

"You still soft there?" I asked quietly. His face clouded for a minute.

"Yes, Jim; I'm still pretty fond of Janet."

I dropped my hand on his shoulder—Connie's a game lad, if there ever was one. For a few seconds we didn't speak; then Connie broke the silence.

"I got an idea, Jim."

"Shoot."

"There aint a doubt in my mind that Egg is worried over Janet. I've noticed and you've noticed and everyone else has noticed that he is a peculiar guy. I don't believe he knows that his soul's his own. That's one reason I never have been able to get sore at him—he's so modest it's funny. I feel like giving him the *ha-ha* every time I run across him.

"The way I dope it out is that he's plumb scared Janet doesn't—doesn't—love him, y'see; and that he's scared he'll spill the beans if he proposes. He's prob'ly trying to key himself up to the proposin'-point—and the nervousness is what's the matter. Get me?"

I thought it over for a minute.

"Yes, I think I get you, Connie. You mean that this mental strain Egg is under is what's playing hob with his work? You mean that once Janet either definitely accepted him or turned him down, he'd hit true form again?"

"That's it. And I got an idea, Jim, how it can be done. I reckon there aint no use taking the matter up with Egg: he's sloppin' over with gentility, and these high-brows don't gas about their love-affairs. And besides, I guess he thinks he's running things strictly accordin' to Hoyle. So s'pose you take the matter up with Janet and see what she says."

"Connie," I says, "how can I take the matter up with Janet? What can I say and what good will it do? Can I go to her and say, 'Janet, Egg loves you—make him propose?' You got a good head, Connie, but it goes wrong sometimes. This is one of the times. The only thing to do is to go straight to Egg—and there's only one man on the team to do it—and that man is *you*."

"Me? My Gawd, Jim, you're talking bughouse. What could I say to him? You're plumb loony—"

"Listen to me, Connie—I can't talk to Egg and there aint another chap on the club who can. You got an excuse—you're an almost-rival, and it's the noble thing for you to do: just like they always do on the stage—see? You go to him and tell 'im that he'd oughter propose to Janet and get the happiness that's coming his way, see? Then he thinks you're a self-sacrificing hero—which same you will be—and him and her gets married and the club jumps into the lead again."

"And I swap the best little girl in the world for a slice of world's series money, eh?" mourns Connie. "It's a helluva proposition you put up to me, Jim—but I always was a darned fool, and I'll do it. Ta-ta!"

He breezed out of the room: that was Connie Stewart all over—doing these things that ordinary guys would think ought to be advertised in the papers and have moving-picture rights sold, just as off-hand and easy.

I smoked about seven cigars and waited for the verdict. Finally Connie



Connie leads me to the window and points to the park across the street. There on the bench was sitting Janet, Egg and a book. "She's got the culture bug," says Connie lugubriously. "He's spouting po'try by the yard, just sloppin' over with it. And she's fallin' for it, Jim, she's fallin' for it—hard!"

breezes into the room looking like a defeated candidate. He slumps on the bed and breaks the seal on a brand-new package of cigarettes. Whenever Connie gets in the dumps and wants to show that he's desperate, he smokes cigarettes of that special variety. They're ten for five cents, natural shape and are jammed with Turkish tobacco. You've smelled 'em, haven't you? You have if you've been within a mile.

I lazed back in my chair until Connie got ready to spiel, and sure enough, after hittin' one of his dope-sticks and swearing at it in Early English, he started.

"I've had a peach of a time," he says, "—puffectly glorious—just like a picnic—on a rainy day. Next time you sic me

onto a deal like that—say, Jim, honest to goodness, it's worse than fanning with one needed to tie and the bases filled. Never again!"

"You're sidetracked, Connie."

"Am I? Oh yes! so I am. Well, to jump straight into it—I sailed into his room and found him sitting by the window mooning like a nickel novel. He looks around and lamps me and comes all in a bunch to his feet, trying to make me see that he loves me. Me, I'm not gonna let him put one over me on the high-brow stuff, so I slaps him on the back and tell him he's a great old sport.

"Anyway, finally we sit down and I tell him I've come in for a confidential chat, see? He says 'Shoot!' or words to that effect,— 'Proceed,' I think it was,— and then I find myself groggy. Where to begin—honest, it was awful, Jim. He looked so—so—damned superior. Finally I gets away to about six false starts and then bungles the whole works:

"'Egg,' I says, 'you and me is both in love with Janet Van Dyke. She's dead gone on you. I come in to say that I'm out of the race—go to it,' I says. 'I just wanted you to know that there wasn't no hard feelin's from me to you and that I know the reason your work has been fallin' off is because you just aint had the nerve to propose to her. And I thought maybe me knowin' Janet pretty well, it'd give you more courage if I told you that I could read the signs and that she's waitin' for you. Go to it, Egg,' I says, 'and I'm rootin' for you. But for God's sake, Egg,' I says, 'play ball like you useter!'

"But here's the funny part. He didn't commit himself one way or the other, but I could see by his face being red as a beet that I'd landed square in

the solar plexus. He just gets up easy and gentle like I'd suggested it myself, and gives me one of them cold-water smiles of his'n, and first thing you know I'm out in the hall tellin' him ta-ta, and he aint said a darned word. Honest, Jim, it seems like a guy with his nerve would of been married to Janet within two weeks after he met her."

I WATCHED the pair of 'em closely for the next couple of days and it was plain that Egg was more distraught than ever. I had to bawl him out in one game because he slung the ball to third after the man had left there for home. Plain ivory—and the fans yowled. Then I did the only thing left: I took the whole bloomin' team into my confidence, and we all agreed that if we worked hand in hand, we could throw Janet and Egg together enough to pull a proposal out of him.

Well, sir, for three weeks we did it: nights in the park; leavin' 'em alone together in the Pullman en route from city to city; tipping off café-car managers about sittin' them together.

But that boob didn't propose! Or if he did, he got a set-back, because while he was blissful enough with her, he'd fidget and squirm and play rotten ball when he wasn't. Believe me, love is a funny thing,—as others have remarked too,—but if it ever played the devil with a man's profession, it did with Egg's. The way he'd begun to run bases was worse'n anything Merkle ever done.

I was reading a book the other day where the author wrote half a chapter on the agony of love. The way he described it, he must've been at least a bowing acquaintance of Egg's. But we knew that pretty soon something had to happen. And it did.

Janet commenced gettin' the weeps. Ever see a woman with the weeps? I don't mean just one little case—I mean the chronic stuff where she blubbers on every occasion and has the blues all the time. It's awful.

Of course it was a cinch that this sparring match with Egg was gettin'

on her nerves; and that was where I got Connie Stewart, held him in a corner with one hand and told him flat that it was up to him to get after Janet.

"You wouldn't do it before, Connie, but this time you got to. There aint nobody else who can. I tell you, kid, there aint a woman in the world who can't make a man propose to her."

"Well," he finally agrees, "I been the goat so far—I might as well make a good job of it. But Jim, if you think this has been a cinch—then your think-tank is on crooked!"

And out he went to straighten things up with Janet. Something had to be done to make Egg play decent ball. It was something awful the way he'd been trottin' on the diamond with his head up in the clouds and his mind in the grandstand and dreamin' about bungalows and apartments and wedding-bells.

An hour,—two hours,—and then the door opens and in comes Connie. His face wears a grin stretching from ear to ear. His eyes is sparklin' like champagne as it hits the glass, and I can see that he's itching to do a dance.

Honest, a load weighin' about seventeen tons was lifted off my shoulders when I lamped his face. It told me the whole story.

"You got away with it?" I gurgled.

"I sure did. Yes sir, I sure did!"

"And she's gonna help us out? She's gonna make him propose?"



"Yes—" He stopped suddenly and looked at me with an expression I didn't get at all, at all. "Say, Jim, what in thunder are you talkin' about, anyway?"

"Huh? Talkin' about? Me talkin' about? Connie, have you gone crazy? What you think I'm talkin' about?"

"Janet?"

"Sure, Janet. What else?"

"Well, so'm I."

"And she'll make him propose?"

"No."

"Then what?"

Connie dropped his voice to a Shakespearean whisper.

"She's made him propose already."

"No! G'wan!"

"Yep."

"When?"

"To-day!"

"Then they're engaged?"

"You bet your life they are!"

"Who-oo-ps! Aint it great! And now the Egg'll play ball, and we'll give 'em a silver-service wedding present out of our share of the world's series money, and—" I headed for the door.

"Where you goin'?" Connie snaps out at me.

"To congratulate Janet and the lucky man," I says.

"That's all right about *her*," he says, lookin' at me cross-eyed like he was prepared for eventualities, "but if you want to mitt the lucky man, you can slip your fin to *me*!"

"Huh?" I gurgled. "*You*!"

"Yes—me."

"But—but—you said—"

"That she made him propose to-day and that she was engaged. Well, the guy I'm talkin' about is *me*. I done my best to help you out, but by George! I'm gonna marry Janet if Egg never catches another ball or steals another base in his high-brow life. Get that?"

"I get it, Connie," I wheezed. "I get it. My Gawd—I sure do." And then: "Poor, poor Egg!"

EGBERT ELWOOD PARRISH was game, all right. The engagement was announced, and he was the first man of the crowd to glad-hand the couple.

Honest, the way he went on you'd have thought he was happy. That's the way with these high-brows: they cultivate hiding their feelings as a fine art.

And just to show that he didn't bear any ill-feeling he got out on the field that afternoon, slammed out a triple and two doubles in four times at bat, stole three bases,—home included,—accepted eleven fielding chances without an error and set the fans wild.

But I knew the kid was under a mental strain, and it struck me that if he could get a few days' rest he'd be in better trim; so I hunted him up and made the offer. He looks me over in surprise.

"But I don't need the rest," he said easily.

"I know you don't *need* it," I floundered, handlin' him gently. "But I thought—er—maybe that news to-day was something of a—shock, as it were, and that—"

He turns his back to conceal his emotions, lights a cigarette and then faces me, his jaw square.

"If I tell you something," he says, "you wont misunderstand—or get sore?"

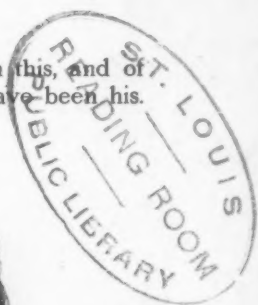
"Sure."

"Well, first I'll get this off my chest. For meddlin' matchmakers, an old maid's convention aint in the class with a major-league ball-club. That's item number one. Item number two is that you hit the wrong couple to match. Janet never was in love with me or I with her. You all—the whole crowd of you—took things for granted and never let us get away. Janet got sore at Connie Stewart and was runnin' with me a while to make him jealous. Then he pulls a line of this John Alden stuff and queers everything.

"It got my goat. I didn't know for a while but what she *might* be a bit interested in me, and I thought maybe I'd committed myself. And I didn't want to marry Janet—nice girl as she is. You see—

"Well,"—he drew a long breath,— "the fact of the matter is, Jim, that I've been engaged for the past year to a girl in Des Moines! *That's* why I was so worried I couldn't play ball!"

WALTER JONES has never written a better story than this, and of the many fine stories we've printed, some of the best have been his.



In the Café Apollyon

By Walter Jones

Author of the "Pembina" stories.

ILLUSTRATED BY
WILLIAM VAN DRESSER

DO you remember Porte Caban? Do you remember how hot it is there of an afternoon—of a summer afternoon, with the coppery sun stewing the littered quays and the scummy tidewater heaving like the wake of a trumper's bilge? Do you remember the empty, grandiose square and the bandstand with a minaret like a mosque? and the Hotel Grande Ste. Louis, that musty tomb? Do you remember the crazy little street that zig-zags past the consulates, and the novelty bazaars, and the sporting club, down to the water-front? And where it debouches on the quays, do you remember, nestling against a moldy warehouse, the tipsy little Café Apollyon, with its Swiss balcony, its Spanish signboard and its French wine cellar? From its spindle-legged tables, on the harbor side, you can look out across the estuary and sip your liquors—or *liqueurs*—and wonder if you'll ever get back again to Liverpool or Havre or Lucerne.

Above the bar is a lurid portrait of Lola Montez. The women that sit at the tables bear Spanish names, but sometimes their faces are Melbourne or Minneapolis. Through the wall, above the tiny stage, is a hole made by a bullet fired at the fleeing president of an equatorial republic. Over the dusty chandelier is draped the faded pink glove of a famous demoiselle who has



W. Van D

With a front that was brazen, in a voice that compassed every nuance of the cabarets, she recited for them a couple of songs that had made le Guilbert famous.

traveled widely but not well. And on a pedestal of honor stands the little statue of Apollo, looking down with curly locks and sleek, boyish limbs and inscrutable smile, upon his eponymous revels.

And of a slow-waning afternoon in the Café Apollyon, it is hot, hot even as the lid of hell. Now do you remember?

THE blinds were all drawn. Enrico dozed behind the bar. In the deep shadows a negroid woman drowsed over her vermouth. Along the wall two sailors pegged rum and cribbage. At the piano hunched a girl in a red wrapper, playing softly to herself. By one window the blind was raised. Before it sat a young man in a khaki suit. The sun slanted in across the table in a sharp line of heat. His head was bent forward. His nervous brown hands were clasped about the base of his wineglass. His fingers kept moving the glass slowly till it cut over the edge of the lengthening shadow.

With a tremor of straying chords, the girl got up from the piano and crossed over to the table. She sat down opposite the man and leaned her cheek in the cup of her hand. "Hullo, dearie," she said—in English; "buy me a drink." He did not answer, but moved his glass again till the sunlight turned the dull yellow of his grog to gold. The girl put out a rounded arm, bare to the elbow, and fingered a bracelet enticingly. "I said hullo, Tommie; buy me a drink."

"Thanks," he answered shortly without looking at her, "but my name isn't Tommie, and I don't buy drinks for ladies I don't know."

She laughed and leaned forward till the light caught the corn-colored fringe of her blondined hair. "I thought you was United States. Aint that as good as an introduction? Now will you buy me a drink?"

He shook his head indifferently.

"Well then, I'll buy one on myself. A lady always pays for a gentleman's favor anyway, don't she? And it'll be more sociable, while we talk." She slipped in behind Enrico and came back

with a bar-glass and a bottle of square-face. "Where's your clearin' papers from, Charlie? You're a han'some boy, aint you? Blue eyes and your mamma's own curly hair! My Gawd, you don't know how sick I get of greasers!"

Her eyes were fixed on him. He could feel them through the dark. His hands suddenly tightened about the glass. The stem broke, and the liquor pooled over the table. "I wish you'd get out of here," he said. "I don't want to talk to you."

"Oh yes you do, Charlie. I heard you half bawlin' when I was playin' them ballads over there. D' you like music?"

"I wish you'd get away from me." He looked out dully across the harbor with eyes that were faded blue, washed-out, red-veined, with the glare of the Southern sun.

But the girl only nestled down lower in her chair. Her glance followed his toward the tide-way. "That's the *Molla Bjorsen* you're lookin' at. She's clearin' to-morrow. The cap'n says he'll take me out to Christiania like a princess. I ask him who's his barque named after, and he blushed when he said his 'sister.' Anyway, I wouldn't go. He's got whiskers like the 'Stralian bush, and I seen some of his men and they're scurvy. Have a little nip, dearie. You'll go rooky, doddlin' there in the sun."

SHE filled her glass and pushed it gently toward him, but he thrust it aside. "Come on, little boy, it'll bring you luck, drinkin' after a lady. That was a grand little number I was playin', wa'n't it—'The Curse of an Aching Heart?' There was a couple o' vaudeville boys left it with me last year on their way to Rio. They sent me a card they're makin' a killin' down there and they'll sure call around if they come back this way. But I aint never seen anything of 'em. There aint nobody ever comes back this way. Tell me, Charlie, where're you from? where's your home?"

"I haven't got any home." Before his lips could tighten, the words slipped through. The sun had left the table now and was slanting across his flat khaki chest. The Spanish amazon was

dozing. The sailors folded up their cribbage-board and ordered another jorum. The girl's fingers stole slowly across the table and rested on those of the Café Apollyon's enigmatical customer. "I haven't any home, either—now. But once I—was Florrie Peterson, of Oriopolis, Indiana. You—you didn't ever happen—to come from out that way?"

"No, I never did."

"It's a long ways from Indiana to Caban. I've been six years goin' the route. You'd scarcely think I'm twenty-seven, would you? It's just like one of them Tommies from the Barbadoes cruiser says to me one time: 'You blonde 'Arriets is hard,' he says, 'but you 'olds yer bloomin' looks.' When I was sixteen, I won the grand prize for the beauty show at the county fair. If them judges could see me now! I s'pose you're one of them engineer boys beatin' it down the Coast somewheres to your job?"

No answer.

"Aint you, Charlie? Or you're just off the Canal? They're tellin' me there aint any livin' with them niggers since they been diggin' in the ditch. Why don't you open up your *parlez*? I aint goin' to eat you. Mebbe you're trekkin' for some of them rubber plantations up the river?"

He shook his head. His eyes were closed; but the girl was not deceived. "You aint sleepin', Charlie. You can't put that over on me! Them rubber plantations is bad for your health. There was a nice kid through here a couple months ago, steerin' for one of 'em. He minded me of Donald Whitmers, that used to sling sodas in the candy store back home. Assistant manager, he says he's going to be. Two years—and then he's goin' back and marry his girl. We was sittin' here just like you and me, and he says to me: 'Drink to her with me, will you—one lady to another?' And I ask' him: 'Do you think she'll wait?' And he says: 'Do I! She's got my ring and I've got her promise.' Poor kid! 'Two years is a long while,' I says, 'but here's hopin'.' Perhaps you're travelin' for your health, Charlie."

"I aint got any health to travel for." The words died away on mumbling lips. He lapsed again into silence.

A SWIFT spasm of anger swept over the girl. From her still childish lips slipped a sharp Spanish oath. Her hand shot across the table and gripped his fingers till they burned. "Cuss you, why wont you talk to me? Can't you see I'm lonesome?"

He paled under his tan and dragged away. "Let me go!" he cried roughly. "You can't get me that way. I aint going to buy. I just heard the music, and come in here—to rest a bit."

Her eyes still held him. She was beyond his insult. "Donald Whitmers! You're his dead ringer!" Her words traveled back shrilly, with her thoughts, to Oriopolis. "He used to call on me twice a week, and every Sunday afternoon he'd take me buggy ridin'. We'd set down and eat our lunch under them oaks on Standpipe Hill, and then I'd sing to him and muss his hair. He had blond hair, curly—just like that marble Dago over there. I s'pose his kids 've got the same now and his wife's wearin' my di'mond ring. The day he seen me on the train with that drummer I swore to him it's all a lie, but he says to me Caesar's wife, or something, his girl has got to be above suspicion." She drew in her breath sharply; a sob followed the shiver that ran through her frame. "There was a little song I used to play him—'She's the Fairest Lily in the Valley:' I was runnin' it over when you come in. Some day I'm goin' crazy. Do you ever *think*, dearie, in your sleep—wake up nights thinkin' till you—"

"Do I ever *sleep*?" The barriers were down at last. Through the taut-pressed hands that shielded his face the pent-up words rushed thickly. "You've got nothing on me, sister. Three years I've been thinking myself dippy. I've been out on the P. and O. packets, and up the Magdalena, and down to Rio—thinking all the time. Listen!" He suddenly lowered the guard of his twitching fingers. His haggard features strained toward hers. "Listen: do you know what I done? I stole five thousand dollars."

His words fell solemnly on the room's oppressive air. Enrico shifted a tousled head on his elbow. The sailors slammed the rattling bar-latch and clattered off down the street. "Five thousand dollars!" laughed the girl. "What's that? There's men bought me drinks that've stole fifty thousand!" A single moment hung heavy between them; then her mood shifted. She covered his hand with her bangled wrist. "You poor boy, you poor mamma's boy, are they trailin' you? You're one of them—what is it they call 'em?—'fugitives from justice,' aint you?"

"I don't know." He took out a stringy handkerchief and wiped his damp forehead. "I heard my father made it up, and my uncle said he wouldn't prosecute; and one time the guy that runs the billiard-parlor back home sent me a paper where it says, 'Return and all will be forgiven.'"

His glance slid away from hers and swept the Apollyon furtively. "You don't need to worry," she assured him with a bitter smile. "There's nobody in the Porte cares who you are. They've all got troubles of their own." She considered his case silently; then she asked with careful brevity: "Women?"



"Thanks," he answered shortly without looking at her, "but my name isn't Tommie, and you was United States. Aint that

He shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, and wine and song: everything that makes a fool out of a lively kid that's always been held under, when he gets his hands on a roll of green. I was in the old boy's hardware business, and when he took me into partnership, I fell right in love with myself. I went on to New York my first summer in the firm, and after a couple of cappers'd steered me into a little Canfield and I'd bought a chorus girl a supper, I thought I was

I don't
as good



I don't buy drinks for ladies I don't know." She laughed and leaned forward. "I thought as good as an introduction?"

one of the regular kings of the town. The old boy was down with the rheumatism a lot, and when I'd been running on to Broadway a few times over Sunday, the bucket-shops got me. And then one day my uncle sits up in bed and sends for his books and his safe-deposits—" He paused. His lips trembled before they tightened. His eyes were fixed on the roadstead, where a thin spiral of smoke rose from the rusty stack of the Norwegian tramper.

"Mebbe *he* couldn't; but your mamma—women aint like men. They forgive—everything."

"I couldn't go back. I—I hate 'em now, like you hate anyone when you've done 'em dirt."

"Neither could I—go back. The last night I was in my sister's house, she says I'm goin' to be her shame to her dyin' day. A person don't forget them things. I don't know as I blame Mollie any, though; her husband told her she

"Two years, now, I've been chasing myself around, but—"

"I know, Charlie," said the girl who had been Florrie Peterson, grimly: "you can't get away from yourself."

He picked up the pieces of his broken glass slowly. "My old man is sixty: I don't see how he could make it up—five thousand dollars."

"Your mamma—is she livin'?"

He bowed his head. The sunlight had left the window. It was only a bar of gold now on the broken mosaic of the floor.

"You say you seen it in the paper once where they said you should come back and all would be forgiven?"

No answer.

"Did you, huh, Charlie?"

"Yes—but how do I know it aint a trick? Could they forgive—"

had to protect her home. Their kid's named after me, though; nothing can change that. She used to put her arms around me—cute little arms she had, all dimples—and coax me—'Pitty Aunt Florrie, tiss me! Some day will I drow up an' be like you?' I s'pose she's 'most raised now. Once I sent her a little locket from New York and a lingerie dress; but I aint never heard nothin'. D' you s'pose Mollie give 'em to her or throwed 'em away?"

"I don't know," said the boy soberly. "Last December I fell in with a guy that was goin' up to Corpus Christi, and I give him one of them Mexican afghans for the old lady, and I says to him mail it somewheres in Texas and I'm much obliged. I aint never heard nothing from it, either. I don't even know whether he mailed it or not; I aint never heard a word!"

"O' course you wouldn't.... We had a real refined home at my sister's—plush furniture, and a piano and all; I used to play a lot. Two years I was Sunday-school pianist; honest to Gawd, I was! The boys 'd drop around evenings and I'd play 'em 'The Riviera Quickstep,' and 'Melba Gavotte,' and sometimes hymns—'Jesus, Lover of My Soul—'"

Her voice wavered and died away under the twinge of a stevedore's oath from the quay. He threw back his head with a trace of pride. "I was real handy about the house. I made a what-not for the parlor once, and a davenport you could fold out for a bed."

"I had a real pleasant room at Mollie's, up in the gable, with a window that looked out over the fields. Them yellow daisies used to grow there in June. I was out pickin' 'em with Donald Whitmers the last Sunday—"

"Two years I played short for the Fact'ry Fiends. I stopped a line drive that saved 'em their last game in the C'mmercial League. The next season they were going to make me captain of the team—"

His glances shifted up furtively toward hers. She flushed crimson as her wrapper and shrank back into the heat-throbbing shadows. "I—I guess we're both dotty, Charlie."

THERE was a long silence. The negroid woman snored; in the street a cumbrous cart with a creaking axle clattered by; a swarthy brunette drew aside the gaudy portière that led from the bar and sidled up to Enrico. The boy spoke first. His eyes were careful not to meet Miss Peterson's again. "Do you really mean there's anything in that what you said: a woman forgives everything?"

"Yes, Charlie, I do." Her breath caught sharply. "Anyways, your mamma."

"There's one of them M. and N. fruiterers loading on the iron pier, aint there?"

"Uh-huh, Charlie, for New York, at midnight. The purser's a friend of mine. Often comes in here. He says there aint no café like the Apollyon this side of Buenos Aires. D' you mean, Charlie—"

"I don't know if I do or not." She leaned forward again to catch his words. "Could we—go up together? I'd be riding on farther West, but I could drop you off at that—Oriopolis place."

"Me!" For a moment she was stunned. Then she tried to laugh. "Why, you just said you couldn't go back."

"I couldn't—alone."

"It's awfully good of you, Charlie, but"—after a fateful pause—"it aint to be thought of."

"Why, sister?"

"Why, I've got a grand little home here, with lots of gentlemen friends that think I'm Cleopatra. Why should I go back to that dump where I'd be—out-lawed?"

He laid his hand on her bangled wrist. "You can't fool me. I seen you bawling. Your sister—a woman forgives everything, you said."

"Yes,"—she lowered her sleek, corn-colored head,—“but not to another woman. You don't understand, Charlie: a girl can't come back. When a man goes bad, he can buy his honor up again, or earn it, or bluff it; but with a woman it's—thumbs down forever."

"I don't see how it's any different, sister. I guess it'd be hard enough for me."

"Hard, Charlie, but not too hard. For a while mebbe the boys 'd stick away from you; but they'd soon begin to play pool with you again, and p'raps your mamma'd take you to church, and one day some nice little girl that thinks it's romantic, your bein' so wild, 'd marry you and you'd settle down and have a nice home.

"But me! Why, the little snub-nosed frump that sells me a pair of gloves in the Emporium's got a license to insult me; and the kids 'd whisper after me on the street—'That's her.' And all the noisy-married men in town that aint afraid of their wives 'd ask me to go buggy riding after dark; and Mollie's family 'd be disgraced forever. And some day I'd get tired of it all and lay down on the tracks there at the bend by the water-works or jump off the high trestle—without the whole business ever doin' me any good, or anybody else. Now d' you understand?"

"Yes, I understand." He looked up at last, with eyes that did not see her, that wandered apathetically about the room, wavered a moment above the portrait of Mlle. Montez and rested vacantly upon the statue of the curly-locked Apollo. "I'm sorry, Miss Peterson,"—he pushed back his chair,—"that I've spoiled your afternoon; but I'm on my way now. Perhaps I'll send you a card from—Rio, or somewhere."

"Rio!" The name went through her like a shock. "Charlie,"—she pointed, pleading, through the window,—"that fruiter out there, you're goin' aboard her to-night. You're goin' back to the States. You—you're!"—she groped desperately for her words—"a handsome boy, and you've treated me more honorable than any man I ever knew. Your life's all ahead of you yet: it's too big to risk breakin' it for five thousand dollars."

He laughed grimly. "Most days I'd break it for five cents, but this afternoon's one of them times something's got to me—them tunes you was playing, or something. You wont go back. Why's my life worth any more to risk breaking than yours?"

"It's different. Like I told you, mine's broke already."

HIS hand groped for his pocket. He drew out a coin and pointed mechanically toward Enrico. "Give it to him—when I'm gone. Some day when you're playing over that 'Fairest Lily in the Valley' piece, ring me in with your gentleman friend. Good-by, sister."

"Good-by." Like a spent echo, the word followed him across the floor; but as his fingers gripped the latch, her wrapper flamed suddenly beside him. "Wait! I'll go with you, Charlie. I'll go with you."

A jeering laugh shrilled out from the bar.

"I'll go with you; honest to Gawd, I will!"

He stood uncertain. She put her hand on his arm. The transient light had died out of his eyes. They drifted over the café indifferently; again the Apollyon was to him only a cabaret, the woman at his side—only a woman. "All right, sister,"—he shook her off gruffly,—"I'll meet you in the plaza at seven-thirty."

She clung to him, braced herself in the doorway, compelled his unwilling glance. "*No, Charlie!* If you go away, it'll be—the end. We got to stick together."

"I wish you'd get away from me." He pushed her aside. The old languor was creeping over him, the remorse that is only lassitude; he was again the cryptic stranger who had sat silent by the window in the slanting sun. Her voice shot out to him with its last ounce of power:

"You sit down, Charlie. You sit down here till I change my clothes, and we'll take a little walk down to that fruiter and mebbe we can fix it up to go on board to-night."

"Oh, blazes—"

"You sit down, Charlie—"

"What's the use, sister?"

"You sit down—"

"It's just a fairy tale I been telling you. I'm one of them rock pilots, on my way to—"

"Here, you sit down by the window, where it's cool, and 'Rico'll pour you a drink till I get back."

"What's the use! It's just giving 'em a chance to slip the mitts on me."

She thrust forward a chair. He hesitated a moment, and then slumped into it. Her ear brushed Enrico's curly head as she left the bar, but the boy was sitting quite motionless when she returned. Her face was chalky without its accustomed rouge; her blonde hair was tousled under her lace hat. She slipped her arm through his and led him out grimly through the street door. Her tense voice took up the tenor of his own thoughts: "Don't I know? It's just givin' 'em their chance on me, too, them women of Oriopolis! We got to keep movin', Charlie. Let's go down by the quay first and fix it about the boat; then we'll walk up past the bazaars to the b'tanical garden."

The *Donna Elena* was drawn up at her berth, a majestic silhouette of lofty decks and yawning funnels. When the purser saw Florrie, he smiled; then he laughed aloud; but his face was sober enough as he booked two tiny staterooms on the main deck aft.

"Now we've got the time to pass till midnight," said Miss Peterson stolidly. They turned up toward the Porte. The sleepy city had awakened; lights gleamed through the trees; from the bazaars floated the drone of lazy trafficking. "Mebbe you'd like to see the fortifications, Charlie." She spoke with careful politeness now, but her arm linked itself tightly through his. "There's an old fort them Spaniards had, and a couple of their guns. The P'ruvions, or somebody, come over the mountains once and killed three thousand of 'em; but it's all grassed over now."

"Anywhere you say, sister." He doggedly shortened his step to match hers.

They wound up the narrow lane that was the street of shops and debouched upon the plaza. The sporting club was a vista of white flannels and soda bottles and wicker tables; a trio of French motors were drawn up before the Hotel Grande Ste. Louis; they curved onward, up the bluff to the botanical gardens which had once been fortifications and lay very peaceful now in the moonlight. "They're buried all around here, them poor boys," she whispered.

"Every once in a while they dig 'em up—something that belongs to 'em, I mean. In school I always used to think history was places that things happened to; but I guess it means people."

He laughed mournfully. "There's lots of things happen to people that never get into history."

They walked back silently to the town. Through the open windows of a lively café tinkled the music of a string band. "Shall we eat?" asked Florrie.

"It'll pass the time."

SHE led him to a quiet corner, far from the too gallant eyes of the gay world of the Porte. As soon as she had considered the menu, she began talking: "Look at them paintings over the orchestra. Aint they beautiful? They brought 'em here from the palace of Manuel Daaz. His wife ran off with a greaser and left him dyin' of the fevers. See that slick little man over there, with the sticky hair? He's from the States, like us. There's a gang pays him to stay out of New York or something. These here candle-shades are pretty, aint they? I always think pink's the prettiest color. It makes everything look so *new*."

She talked on suavely, desperately, through the tinkle of the music, her eyes ever on his. Only once he interrupted her prattle. At the close of a staccato anecdote concerning Señora Daaz, he looked at her blankly.

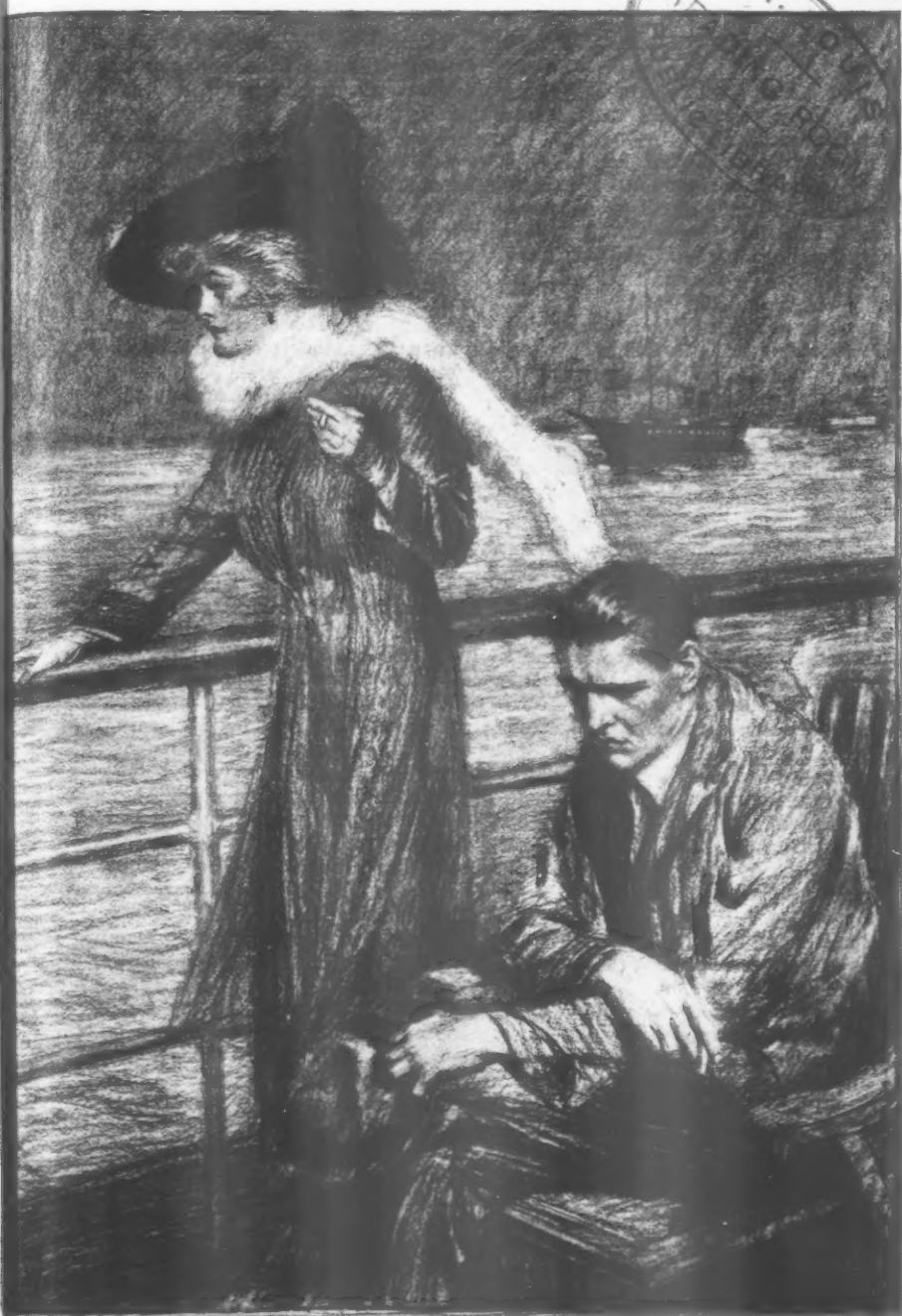
"Perhaps they don't live there any more," he said.

She gripped the stem of her wineglass with a startle. "Who?"

"My folks. They were talking once about moving to the country."

When he had paid the score, they sought his hotel so that he might order his luggage sent to the ship. Halfway across the plaza he halted sheepishly. "Sit here a minute, sister. I'll only be a second in the bar. To-night's a big business. I need me a drink for a bracer."

"You keep away from the bar, Charlie. I'm goin' in the lobby with you, myself. When we get back to the Apollyon, you can order all you want on the house."



Using with her arm on the rail, she pointed out over the ship's bow. "Just fancy! Ten days more, and you'll be back to your home. I been thinkin' what're you goin' to do, Charlie?"

"The Apollyon! We aint goin' back there?"

"We got to, Charlie, so nobody'll get wise. I got friends here that'd never stand for me leavin'."

Somberly he followed her. Like a jewel from an ash-heap, the Apollyon sparkled through the long shadows. Within, the tables were crowded. The air reeked with heat and gin and perfume and the sinister gayety of those whom no proprieties deter.

Florrie was greeted by a dozen voices of acclaim. She slipped in and out among the tables, lighting here a cigarette, drinking there from a gentleman's glass. The girl who had wheedled Enrico came over and sat down beside the stranger. At ten o'clock the habitués asked Miss Peterson to sing. Señorita Rositzka, who had once been Bessie Turpin, of West Topping, Surrey, ceased dancing, and the raven-haired youth at the piano swung from "La Rumba" into a boulevard prelude. A score of hands assisted Florrie to the platform. With a front that was brazen, in a voice that compassed every nuance of the cabarets, she recited for them a couple of songs that had made la Guilbert famous.

Then suddenly her eyes encountered the boy's. She paused, white-faced, uncertain, while the pianist repeated her accompaniments; then, with the glance of one who sees for the last time, she looked up at the portrait of Lola Montez, at the pink glove on the chandelier, at the tiny hole, high up in the wall, where the shot of equatorial destinies had been fired.

At last, impulsively, she jumped down from the stage, brushed the sleek-haired youth aside and seated herself on the piano-stool. When she had run over a few low chords, her lips opened—upon the verses of the song she had sung for Donald Whitmers. In English, she sang it to them: "The Fairest Lily in the Valley." Technically it was a mediocre performance; but even the many who did not understand her words comprehended that the night marked an epoch in the life of the *chanteuse*. Perhaps, they reflected, Fernando Prada was buying the señorita the new diamond

lizard in Veradi's; perhaps a box of dresses had come from Paris; perhaps she was planning a picnic *à deux* to Rio or the Zone.

When her applause had finished, she stood up and faced the company. "My friends," she said in her best Spanish, "from more you must excuse me, for to-night I have a very particular engagement."

For a few moments they stared at her and at the silent man in the corner; then, the men with a laugh, the women with a sneer, they resumed their polyglot gayety.

Softly Florrie Peterson stole up to the marble statue that enthroned the revel. "Good-by, Apollyon," she whispered, pressing the young god's white lips; "good-by, forever." Then she caught up her boa and slipped out with the stranger.

UNDER a hot, metallic moon the Donna Elena tugged gently at her hawasers. The iron doors of her hold were still open. Here and there a disc of light gleamed through a porthole. They sat down, aft, on the deserted promenade. The boy hunched forward listlessly in a deck-chair, puffing a cigarette. Florrie's hands were tensely folded in her lap. At every vagrant noise that drifted out across the harbor she startled. "My Gawd," she cried, "why don't they start! I'm nervouser'n a cockatoo. It's goin' to be awful hot in them little coops. I wish't a person could sleep on the decks. Is this here the last port of call, d' you know, Charlie?"

He nodded.

She sighed a quick relief. "I didn't know but mebbe they put in at Kingston, or somewhere. It seems like I'm full of the jumps to-night. I can't sit still. Gimme a cigarette, Charlie." She sprang up and began pacing the deck. Pausing with her arm on the rail, she pointed out over the ship's bow. "Just fancy! Ten days more, and you'll be back to your home. I been thinkin' what're you goin' to do, Charlie?"

"I dunno."

"I been thinkin', mebbe you could go into the cigar business, or open up a pool-room, or something. You want to

get started right away, 'fore them saloon loafers get you. Mebbe, after a while, *he'd* take you back in the hardware."

"The devil he would!" he drooped. "You aint never told me *your* program, sister."

"Me!" She waved her future aside. "Oh, I aint got any. Millinery, perhaps, or plain dressmakin'. Aint it a scorchin' night? D' you ever wonder, Charlie, where does a person go—when they die?"

"I don't know as I ever have," he lied dully. "It depends a good deal, I s'pose, where they've gone when they're living."

"Well, them that's went to Porte Caban, for instance?" With a quick gesture, she tossed her cigarette away and turned from him toward the wharf. "Look, they're casting off." Somewhere forward a bell rang to the engine-room. The propellers began to turn. Her hand closed over his on the rail. "Mebbe we'd ought to have waited—for the next boat, Charlie."

"Mebbe we had, sister; but I—I left that up to you."

"I know you did, Charlie." She drew herself up with a little stiffening of pride. "And I don't want you ever to be sorry that I doped it like I did." Her voice trembled. "Promise me, Charlie, you'll see it through."

He made no reply.

"If you don't, Charlie, it's a—lone ace in a losing hand."

A tear dropped on his clenched fist. "Sure, sister, I'll promise."

"Thanks, Charlie." He drew his fingers away and bowed his head to shut out her weeping. The lights of the Porte were fading. With blinking eyes, she took a step toward them. "You got to excuse me, Charlie. I sure am dotty to-night. It seems like I'm all the time seein' things: that there darned old

Sunday-school back home, with me playin' the hymns and Donald Whitmers takin' up the collection. I aint never really wished his wife any harm; honest to Gawd, I aint! And it seems like I can't never forget that marble Apollyon back in the café there, Charlie. He's just like a innocent, curly-headed kid that you can throw your arms around and kiss him the same as he was your brother. Who was he, anyway, Charlie—Apollyon?"

"How do I know, sister? One of them old Greek gods of love or beauty, or something."

"Love!" She laughed bitterly. "The fella that carved him out didn't know much. If love only was like that—"

She caught in her breath sharply. Her glance rested on his bent head. "Some time you'll tell your mamma about me, wont you, Charlie?" She put her hand out as if to touch him again, and then slipped away a step farther. "Remember, it's true, just like I told you: a woman can't come back. With her it's—thumbs down forever. Good-by, Charlie."

He did not answer. Her words reached him vaguely. In the swift whirl of the propellers he was drowning his own chaotic thoughts. "Good-by, Charlie." Above the *Donna Elena's* engines, plowing through the night, something in the tensify of her tone penetrated. He glanced up. The chair beside him was vacant, the deck empty. Across the promenade, snakelike, ominous, glided a feather boa.

With a shudder, he threw off his lethargy and bent over the rail. Through the churning phosphorescent pallor of the waves drifted up a faint echo: "Go back, Charlie! go back!" For an instant he stood petrified with horror; then he rushed forward, shouting, toward the watch.

"Plato! Plato!"

by Holworthy Hall

The story of a youth too proud to marry on nothing and of a girl too game to give him up.

In the next—the May—
issue, which appears on the
news-stands April 22nd.

"Marthy"

by Ida M. Evans

The story of an ugly duckling who found a place in the sun, but couldn't stand prosperity.

A new exploit of Philo Gubb, noted detectakative, graduate in twelve complete lessons of the Rising Sun Correspondence School of Detecting.



"There!" exclaimed the stout lady.
 "There! You see how upset your father is, when he speaks to you like that! Your poor fath—"

The Kinwiller Case

By Ellis Parker Butler

The Foremost Humorist in America

THE gas-jets in Mayor Hemmerding's office burned noisily, leading Mr. Roth to remark that probably Sime Wallis, who owned the gas-works, was blowing into the pipes so that he could collect two dollars a thousand feet for his breath. Mr. Walbeck laughed at this; he always did. Mr. Torrington, the City Surveyor, had rolled up the large blue-print he had been showing. The committee appointed by the Board of Trade had completed its conference with the Mayor, and the committee members were ready to go home. The members of the committee were Mr. Roth, a real-estate

ILLUSTRATED
 BY REA IRVIN

dealer; Mr. Walbeck, a lawyer; Mr. Callings, in the house-moving and heavy trucking business; Alderman Grange, a professional politician; and Mr. Darley, a large real-estate owner and the reputed meanest man in Riverbank. As Mr. Torrington snapped the rubber band around his roll of blue-prints, a face appeared for a moment outside the Mayor's window—the face of Hod McGuffy, the leading drunkard of Riverbank—and then disappeared again in the darkness. "Well, gentlemen, we seem to agree," said Mr. Torrington, "so we might as well go home. Good night, your honor! Good night, gentlemen!"

This was eight years before the Kinwiller case was placed in the hands of Philo Gubb, the paper-hanger-detective and graduate of the Rising Sun Detective Bureau's Correspondence School of Detecting, for solution, and the incident is related here because the rules of honest detective-story-writing require that the name of the true criminal be mentioned early in the story. Once the true criminal is mentioned, the author may throw suspicion on any character in the tale and the reader cannot complain. He has not been treated in a mean, underhanded way. Only unprincipled detective-story-writers drag in the true criminal at the end of the tale without having mentioned him early in the story. Here you have eight men mentioned in the very first paragraph of the story, eight years before the crime was discovered. Whatever happens, dear reader, you cannot say the author has not treated you fairly. Step up and pick your criminal! But wait! here is some inside information:

In 1906 Riverbank was on the jump over a real-estate boom that threatened to make everyone wealthy, provided he owned real estate or could raise money to dabble in it. Mayor Hemmerding himself was a heavy operator, owning Hemmerding's Addition. Although in the boot and shoe business, he had mortgaged his stock and his store building and borrowed all he could from the bank in order to purchase the fields later plotted as his addition to the town; and he had mortgaged the addition itself to the fullest. He owed more than he should and was hard pressed for money. Real estate was going up in value (soon!), but no one was yet buying vacant lots. The R. C. & J. railway was expected to come to Riverbank, and when it came, lots would sell like hot peanuts, but the railway was not yet arrived. It was a period of anxious but hopeful waiting, and all the big real-estate operators were using every means to raise money to pay their taxes and interest. Mayor Hemmerding did not own a single piece of real estate that had a house on it. If he had owned such a piece, he could have sold it. Lots with buildings were in good demand.

As partners in his real-estate deal, Mayor Hemmerding had Mr. Roth and Mr. Callings. Mr. Roth was a real-estate dealer and agent. He was as thin and foxy as Mr. Hemmerding was fat and jovial. It was said generally that Mr. Roth was "pretty slick at a trade," and the general opinion was that he was none too scrupulous. Every cent he possessed was in the Hemmerding Addition deal, and—here's the truth—he had held back not a few of the rents he had collected for his clients and had used the money to help pay his own interest and taxes. He told no one this. The secret was locked in his safe in his small office on Main Street (later rechristened Second Avenue), and as he had no clerks or partners, it seemed secure there.

Mr. Callings was a very different man. He was a big, brawny, red-faced fellow, rough and loud-spoken. He did not know much about business, having grown from a truck-driver to a contractor in house-moving, hauling and similar lines. He was subject to fits of wild anger when he felt himself defrauded in the slightest way. What was his was his, and he didn't care how he got it back, if it was taken from him. If anyone stole a whip from him, he would go into a rage, and the first whip he saw he would take. He did not care whose whip it was.

Mr. Torrington was a youngish man, beardless and a little stooped in the shoulders from bending over drawing-boards. His position as City Surveyor did not pay him much, and he was possessed by a mad itch to acquire wealth. Mr. Walbeck, the lawyer, was a man of prominence. He was one of the town's leading lawyers and a shrewd fellow. He had a dusky, creased face and wore a long brown mustache. Alderman Grange was a short, ruddy man, and it was whispered that he was one of the few aldermen who might be induced to accept money for pushing through an ordinance. Sime Wallis, owner of the gas-works, was the only truly wealthy man mentioned. He was some forty-seven years of age, close as a porous plaster that has been properly applied. Like all the rest of those mentioned, he had invested largely in un-

improved Riverbank real estate, but unlike them, he had plenty of ready money to pay his carrying charges—his taxes. He owned his real estate outright and had no interest to pay. He was one of those who collected interest from others. He owned the house in which he lived, a big brick structure on Wallis Street (later called Fourteenth Street), and he also owned the house in which Mayor Hemmerding lived on Oak Place, a short *cul de sac* of a street which later was renamed Wallis Street in order that the old name of Wallis might not disappear from the city maps entirely. Sime's grandfather, old Sime Wallis, had been one of the early settlers and a man highly respected by his townsmen.

Hod McGuffy, the leading town drunkard, was that and nothing more—except that, when well liquored, he was also the leading town prevaricator. He learned to lie fluently, soon after he was married, by trying to explain to his wife—poor creature!—how he happened to lose his wages. To come home drunk from his work on pay-day and still be able to explain that his wages had disappeared in some perfectly reasonable and innocent manner, and to do this week after week, forced him to depart from the ways of truth.

The result was what might have been expected. Whisky and lies became twin brothers in Hod's existence. The minute the first drop of whisky touched Hod's lips he began to prevaricate. It seemed so necessary that he should tell his wife an untruth when he reached home that he began to practice as soon as he tasted the whisky, and as if afraid he might lose the knack of lying if he did not stick to it faithfully, he told nothing but whoppers as long as a drop of whisky remained in his system. It was not long until he couldn't tell the truth when he tried. The best he could do in the truth line was to preface each whopper with the statement, "Now, this is the honest truth, s'elp me, Jenny!" No one had the slightest idea why he swore by "Jenny." His wife's name was Mary May.

No doubt you have already chosen the criminal. Yes? That's good! Now we may proceed.

IT was not until three years after the evening conference in the Mayor's office that Philo Gubb came to Riverbank. By that time the R. C. & J. Railway had decided to cross the Mississippi at Derlingport instead of at Riverbank and had done so, and the boom was flat. Mr. Gubb came to a town that had almost forgotten there had ever been a boom threatened. Real estate was flat. Some of the speculators had gone through bankruptcy; some were still owners of outlying lots that they hated to think about; and some were still trying to hold onto the real estate they had bought, and were struggling in the grip of debt and distress. Mr. Roth, the real estate agent, was one of these. For five years following the coming of Mr. Gubb, Mr. Roth struggled; then he took all the evidences of his crookedness out of his safe, burned them and shot himself dead. This was in 1914.

On the eighth of July, 1914, which fell on a Wednesday, Philo Gubb was, at eight o'clock in the evening, sitting at his desk in his office in the Opera House Block in Riverbank. The evening was dark, for the sky was covered with heavy clouds, and Philo had lighted his electrics. He was, for the five thousandth time, reading the famous Twelve Correspondence Lessons issued by the Rising Sun Detective Bureau's Correspondence School of Detecting.

Whenever Mr. Gubb had a half-hour to spare, he read the lessons. At each reading some new and unexpected revelation came to him. The words he was reading now were part of Lesson XII, telling "How to Make Arrests," and the words were: "The captain or master of a ship takes charge of all prisoners breaking the laws while aboard the ship." This was, no doubt, of great value to a paper-hanger-detective located at Riverbank, Iowa, for Mr. Gubb was repeating the words over and over to himself in an effort to learn them by heart.

"The captain or master—" he repeated, closing his eyes so that they might not cheat by reading the words, and keeping his long forefinger on the printed page. "The captain or master—" "

He stopped short, for his door opened suddenly. Mr. Gubb was sitting with his back to the door, and he wheeled his chair quickly to see the intruder who had thus interrupted his detective studies. The intruder was, in fact, six intruders.

The intruders entered the room in a manner that suggested at first that they were playing the game called "Crack the Whip." At the head of the line came a violently excited little man, and while he was not actually holding the hand of the stout, puffing lady who followed him, he had his left hand extended toward her as if he had just dropped her hand. The stout breathless lady held the hand of a young girl of some twelve years, and she in turn held the hand of a lad of nine, who held the hand of a small girl of seven, who grasped the hand of a boy of five. On the faces of the four children there were traces of recent tears. The youngest two were still blubbering. The stout lady seemed ready either to weep or burst into anger, and the violently excited little man was most evidently suffering from every sort of emotion. As suddenly as he had burst into the room he stopped, turned and raised his hand.

"Stop! Now, stop!" he cried violently. "Not another word! Not another sniffle! Adelia, silence! Augustus, silence!"

He clapped his hands together angrily. The smallest boy bit a sob in two in the middle and stood with his mouth open. The seven-year-old girl actually halted with one foot in the air and was so frightened she did not dare put it to the floor.

"There!" exclaimed the stout lady. "There! You see how upset your father is, when he speaks to

you like that! See! Your poor fath—"

"Aurora!" exclaimed the excited little man angrily.

The stout lady jumped as if all the breath had been suddenly jolted out of her body. Although she was head and shoulders taller than her husband and weighed probably three times as much, it was evident that at this moment she was afraid of him. His reproof silenced her. He turned to Mr. Gubb.

"Some wretch—some unprincipled wretch—stole my house!" he cried. "Stole it, I tell you! Stole it, lock, stock and barrel!"

"And you desire to want that I should find it?" asked Mr. Gubb in his calmest manner.

"Aurora!" cried the little man with exasperation. "He asks me if I want him to find it! I come here—here to his room—I come to him here—here where he has a sign on his door—a sign that says, DETECTIVE AND PAPER-HANGER, and I tell him—I tell him to his face some one stole my house, and he asks—this man asks if I want him to find it! Do you think I want him to find it? Do you think—"

"Yes. Or, I mean, no! Ah—ah—yes!" stammered the stout lady.

"Kindly shut up!" snapped the excited little man. "I'm talking, Aurora.

Am I talking or are you talking?"

"Yes—no," said Aurora miserably.

"I hope so!" cried the little man. "And he asks me if I want to find my house. What does he think I want, I'd like to know!"

"The information conveyed onto my sign is of two kinds of sorts," said Mr. Gubb haughtily, "being into regards of paper-hanging and detectaking. It isn't rarely unusual but house-owners



The one or two foot-passengers who passed through Kinwiller Street while Mr. Gubb was looking for clues in the dark thought he was a goat eating the tin cans that had been dumped there, and paid no attention to him whatever.

desire houses paper-hung and come here for that aforesaid purpose."

The little man breathed so angrily that his chest visibly rose and fell.

"And I'd be a pretty specimen, wouldn't I, coming here to have paper-hanging done in a house I don't know where it is?" he asked. "I haven't got the house, have I? Didn't I tell you some one stole it? Didn't I, Aurora?"

"Ye—yes, Andrew," said the stout lady feebly.

"Then what's he talking about?" the little man asked. "What's he wasting all this time about? Why don't he know I want him to find my house? Do I have to tell him? Do I?"

His eye happened to alight on the twelve-year-old girl.

"Ye—yes, Popa," she said.

"Hold your tongue, Aminta!" said the stout lady angrily.

"You hold yours, Aurora!" snapped the little man. Mr. Gubb cast his eye over the six. Of the six, the girl called Aminta seemed the least excited. One of the duties of a detective is to discover what he is wished to detect and to discover it with the least possible waste of time. It was evident that the little man and his family were excited to the verge of madness; and of the six, Aminta alone seemed in a state (and of an age) to give any sane information. Mr. Gubb laid his hand on the child's shoulder.

"Now everybody keep silently quiet," he said, "until I ask off of this young child what I want to know the knowledge of. Little girl, can you tell me all about the facts of what your father wants me to know?"

"Why—why—" said Aminta, "why, Popa, he owns a house, and—and he never saw the house and—and—and—"

"On Kinwiller Street—" the little man began, but Mr. Gubb silenced him with a wave of the hand.

"And—and we live in Guteburg, Pennsylvania," said Aminta, "and—and Popa's cousin Anna died and left Popa the house, and—and that was a long time ago, and so Popa just got the rent."

"Proceed to continue onwards," said Mr. Gubb kindly.

"So—so then Popa didn't get the

rent any more," continued Aminta, "and—and so he didn't know why he didn't get the rent, and so the man that sent the rent was dead, and that was why."

"And the rascal stole my house!" almost shouted the little man. "Roth, that was his name,—Philander Roth,—and I came down here because the infernal rascal was dead and didn't send me the rent any more; and the house is gone!"

"The house is absolutely and completely gone!" said the stout wife. "It has been stolen—moved off the lot—it is absolutely and completely gone!"

"And—and Popa don't know what the house looked like," said Aminta, "so—so he don't know how to find it, and he wants you to find it, because you are a deteckative. And that's why."

"Perhaps possibly the house burned up down to the ground," suggested Mr. Gubb.

"Go look!" cried the little man. "Burned! There's never been a match burned on that lot! Go look!"

MR. GUBB did go and look, but not immediately. Quieted by his professionally serene manner, the family of house-losers became gradually calmer until the little man was able to speak in a rational manner. It was evident from his story that he had been vastly excited by the discovery of his loss. His name, Mr. Gubb learned, was Andrew Kinwiller, and he was the last of the celebrated Kinwiller family that had played such an important part in the settlement and early days of Riverbank. Few Riverbank names had been more revered in Riverbank than the name of Kinwiller, and now he was the last of the family. Few properties had been greater than the Kinwiller properties in Riverbank, and now this fifty-foot lot on Kinwiller Street with the two-and-one-half-story dwelling was all the real estate remaining in the name of Kinwiller—and the house itself was gone!

As Aminta had said, the house and lot had been left to Andy Kinwiller by will by his cousin Anna. Mr. Roth had collected the rent and forwarded it with no great regularity (or had given Mr.

Kinwiller to suppose he collected it) until death ended that gentleman's career. Mr. Kinwiller had, about that time, decided to sell his little store at Guteburg and move to Riverbank. Perhaps, he suggested, the news of his coming had been the cause of Mr. Roth's suicide. Mr. Kinwiller already knew that Mr. Roth had been deeply involved and that he had embezzled rent moneys and other funds.

Upon arriving at Riverbank, Mr. Kinwiller and his family had, with ingenuous enthusiasm, proceeded at once to look for the house they owned. They went direct from the train, asking where Kinwiller Street lay, finding it without great trouble. It was a short street, and it had the usual neat signboard at each end informing all that the street was Kinwiller Street. The house owned by Mr. Kinwiller was Number 11 Kinwiller Street. The enthusiastic six Kinwillers turned into Kinwiller Street when they reached it—and stopped short. There was not a house in the street! Not one house on either side! No house at all!

Mr. Gubb listened to the relation of these facts with the greatest possible interest. During his career as a paper-hanger he had done work in many curious houses, including the decoration of one while it was on rollers, proceeding from one location to another, but he had never, so far as he knew, hung paper in a house that had been stolen. During his career as a detective he had handled many peculiar cases, but never had he been called upon to recover a stolen house. When Mr. Kinwiller had told all he knew of the case, Mr. Gubb coughed gently behind his hand.

"A deteckative, the same as other kinds of folks," he said rather diffidently, "has to live an existence by means of food, et cet'ry and so forth, and—"

"You mean," said Mr. Kinwiller, "you don't work for nothin'."

"That's almost precisely what I exactly mean," said Mr. Gubb.

"And I didn't expect you'd take time to do the job of finding my house for nothing," said Mr. Kinwiller. "I'll pay what's right if you find the house. What do you figure would be right?"

"One hundred dollars," said Mr. Gubb promptly. "A house is a valuable piece of property, and a deteckative ought to be paid into proportion of what the stole property is worth in value."

Mr. Kinwiller frowned.

"No, sir!" said he. "That aint the right way to look at it at all. If I was to ask you to find a diamond, I'd say it was worth a hundred dollars, easy. A diamond is so little it's hard to find. A house is so big it oughtn't to be any job at all to find it. If you was an astronomer and I wanted you to find one of these here little asterisks or whatever you call 'em, that aint no bigger than a pinch of dust, I'd expect to pay a good price; but if I wanted you to find the moon, I'd look for you to do it cheap because the moon is so big you can't hardly help seein' it. Same way with a house. It's big and easy to find."

"No, sir!" said Mr. Gubb. "The bigger the largeness of a thing is, the more a deteckative had ought to get for the job. A diamond that is lost away is a thing that's so easy lost that anybody might find it easy, but a house is a thing that's so hard to lose that when it is lost, it is most probably so thoroughly lost nobody couldn't find it without the most greatest trouble."

"No, sir!" said Mr. Kinwiller. "It's easier to find a crowbar than it is to find a needle, and—"

Mr. Gubb smiled.

"Into consideration of the fine family you've got," he said, "I'll find the house for the sum of fifty dollars, to be paid over to me when I find it."

Mr. Kinwiller considered this. He drew his wife aside and consulted with her.

"We wont make no lump-sum deal like that at all," he said after his consultation. "We don't know what the thief done to that house. Maybe he split it up into parts before he stole it, and all you'd find would be one part, and then you'd say: 'Here's your house; give me my fifty dollars!' No sir! That house had ten rooms in it, and the best we'll do will be to give you five dollars a room for all the rooms you find."

"It wouldn't hardly be worth my

while to find one or two rooms," said Mr. Gubb doubtfully. "What kind of a house was it?"

"A frame house," said Mr. Kinwiller. "Two stories and a half, front and back porches."

"Well, I'm pretty well and completely jobbed up onto my paper-hanging and decorating branches just at the present moment of time," said Mr. Gubb, "and I aint keen to go hunting houses per the room. I don't aim to do retail deteckating in that manner of way. This is the last final proposition I'll make onto the subject: I'll find the house for twenty dollars per story; twenty dollars for the first story and twenty dollars for the second, and ten dollars for the half story, and if I find out the cellar and porches, I'll throw them into the bargain free gratis for nothing."

He said this in a firm, take-it-or-leave-it manner, and after considering for a moment, Mr. Kinwiller accepted and shook hands on the bargain.

It was agreed that Mr. Gubb should get to work on the case immediately. And indeed, he was eager to do so. At Mr. Kinwiller's request, he suggested a boarding-house for the six Kinwillers, and he made the six step into the hall while he donned a disguise, for he meant to begin operations at once. He chose the disguise listed in the Rising Sun Detective Agency's Correspondence School of Detecting's Supply Bureau's catalogue as "No. 23, Young Man of Norwegian Parentage," and dressed himself in it. His reason for choosing this disguise was that he meant to proceed to Kinwiller Street and examine the ground at No. 11 carefully for clues, and in case he was observed, he felt he could quite easily cast suspicion aside. Anyone seeing him on his hands and knees in the vacant lot might easily suppose he was a young Norwegian of a romantic disposition hunting four-leaved clovers to give to his sweetheart. As a matter of fact, the one or two foot-passengers who passed through Kinwiller Street while Mr. Gubb was looking for clues in the dark thought he was a goat eating the tin cans that had been dumped there, and paid no attention to him whatever.

ON the way to Kinwiller Street, which was well out in the suburbs, Mr. Gubb left the six Kinwillers at the excellent and low-priced boarding-house of Mrs. Susan Connors on Fifth Street. He waited there only long enough to be assured that they had found rooms and had been accepted as temporary guests and to urge upon Mr. Kinwiller the necessity of saying nothing about the stolen house. Then he proceeded to the vacant lot.

The soil in the neighborhood of Kinwiller Street was of a nature that indicated that it had once been the bed of a creek, or a moraine where some ancient glacier had deposited its burden of very small stones; in other words, it was a gravel-bed. Mr. Gubb chose the spot, as nearly as he could figure it by pacing from the end of the street, that would represent No. 11. He glanced up and down the street to see that his steps were not dogged, and dropping to his hands and knees he crept cautiously into the intense darkness that enshrouded the weed-grown plot of ground. His hands touched coarse grass in tufts, scattered dandelions, an occasional nettle and plenteous gravel that made stone-bruises on his knees. As he moved forward, he encountered a mound of tin cans. This might well be a clue. Some of the cans still had their labels adhering, and Mr. Gubb's keen mind saw that if he took the cans and searched the grocery stores he might discover where the canned goods had been purchased and then learn who still purchased similar brands. Thus he could obtain the addresses of all the users; and no doubt one of the houses in which the users dwelt would be the missing house. He chose a can that had contained pineapple and one that had contained tomatoes and put them in his coat pockets and proceeded onward.

Suddenly his hands went forward into empty space and the gravel under his knees slipped, and he went downward swiftly, with gravel clattering around him. At the bottom of a deep hole he stopped as suddenly as he had started, rolled over and sat upright.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "At any rate of event, I have deteckated whereabouts

the cellar is at!" And he cleaned the gravel out from between his collar and his neck with his long forefingers. Some of this gravel he put in his pocket as being a valuable clue. If by chance any similar gravel was found adhering to the underpinning of any house in Riverbank, that house might well be looked into. Its past might well be carefully examined. It would, doubtless, prove to be the stolen house.

For several hours, after he had clambered out of the deep hole, Mr. Gubb continued his investigation. He discovered, among other valuable clues, an old shoe with a sole that flapped open and shut like the mouth of a hungry alligator, a tin wash-boiler from which the copper bottom had been removed, a wire bed-spring, two antique corsets and a much deteriorated tin dishpan. These, unless No. 11 Kinwiller Street had been used as a dump, indicated that a house had stood on the spot, and it was easily seen that the house was now gone. The shoe and one of the corsets Mr. Gubb took with him when he returned to his office about midnight. He rightfully felt that he had done a good evening's work on the job.

BRIGHT and early the next morning Mr. Gubb, wearing disguise No. 8, Irish Washerwoman, proceeded cautiously to Second Street with the two tin cans, the antique corset and the old shoe. He found that Panama Brand Pineapple and Green Star Brand Tomato were sold by every grocer in Riverbank. Carefully worded queries brought out the information that Panama Brand Pineapple and Green Star Brand Tomato were used by every family in Riverbank, by some twenty shanty-houseboat families along the river front and by ten steamboats that stopped at Riverbank. At the first dry-goods store his

query, "Whom ever wore this kind of sort of corset?" brought the reply, as the lady clerk looked at it with amazement, "Stars above! I can't hardly believe anybody ever wore one like that!" while similar queries at other stores elicited, "Mercy! it must have been a cave-woman!" and "Say! nobody's worn them kind since the flood!" Nor was the shoe more helpful. No dealer would admit that any such looking piece of footwear ever left his store.

Mr. Gubb left the store of the last shoemaker perplexed. There remained of his clues only the gravel, and while the method was far from spectacular, it seemed that the only means of discovering the stolen house must be to search the underpinning of every house in Riverbank;

so, followed by an interested crowd, he walked through Second Street in the direction of the residence district. As he neared the south end of the street, he stopped short before a small, tumble-down structure over the door of which were the words "BENJ. CALLINGS—TRUCKING & HOUSEMOVE'G." The door itself stood wide and was a double door, large enough to permit the passage of a team and truck. Inside the structure were stalls for horses, room for trucks and, in one corner, the windlass and rollers and planks of the house-mover's trade. In the doorway, leaning against the frame and resting from his temporary labor as stableman, stood Hod McGuffy. Two things struck Detective Gubb at the same instant: Hod McGuffy's shoes were in much the same condition and of much the same appearance as the one Mr. Gubb still held, and if a house was to be stolen, a house-mover would be needed to steal it! Mr. Gubb stopped right there.

"'Lo, Gubb!" said Hod McGuffy. "Watcha deteckatin' to-day?"



Bright and early the next morning Mr. Gubb, wearing disguise No. 8, Irish Washerwoman, proceeded cautiously to Second Street with the two tin cans, the antique corset and the old shoe.

"Sh!" hissed Mr. Gubb mysteriously. "I'm into disguise. Don't let on to pretend you know whom I am. Where at did you get them shoes?"

"Them shoes?" lied Hod thoughtfully, looking down at his footwear. "Now, them shoes I wear because they're what you might call historical shoes. Them shoes was the shoes Ted Roosevelt wore when he charged up San Jewann Hill. Teddy gave 'em to me hisself. I got the letter he wrote me." He fingered his pocket. "Pshaw—must have left it to home!"

Although disappointed in this clue, Mr. Gubb moved closer.

"Is Mister Benjamin Callings around about near by?" he whispered.

"Nope. He went to Cincinnati on the Chicago Express last night," lied Hod, for Mr. Callings was asleep in the little office not three yards away. "He had a tellygraft his mother was took with hyderphoby. Ma d cow bit her. She was tryin' to curry the cow, and the currycomb scratched the cow, and the cow bit her on the neck. The doctor tellygraft she was low an' gettin' lower every—"

"How long you been engaged into this house-moving business?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"Oh! ten years or maybe twenty," lied Hod, stretching languidly. "Lemme see. Ben hired me in 1892—March thirteen, 1892. I recollect the date because it was the day after I got my divorce from my first wife. Her name was Sally Susan—"

Mr. Gubb hastily raised his skirt and retrieved a notebook and pencil from his trousers pocket. He jotted the information hastily in the book. He did not know that Hod McGuffy had had but one wife. He was in pursuit of more important information. His bird-like eyes narrowed.

"Whenabouts in period of time did

Benjamin Callings move that old Kinwiller house off from No. 11 Kinwiller Street?" he asked craftily.

Hod McGuffy scratched his tangled thatch thoughtfully.

"That there house?" he mused. "That house we moved off from No. 11 Kinwiller Street? That was," he lied easily, "June tenth, 1908. We started to move her at eleven o'clock—"

"At night time?" queried Mr. Gubb hastily.

"Sure!" lied Mr. McGuffy. "At eleven o'clock at night. We had to move it at night on account of—of smallpox."

Mr. Gubb's nerves were tingling with excitement.

"Where at did you move it to?" he asked eagerly.

"Why," lied Hod McGuffy glibly, "we moved it outside the city limits and kept a-movin' it for seven weeks until the smallpox scare was over. We moved it around and around from one place to another because it was a boardin'-house. The health doctor had a notion there was smallpox in the house," lied Hod, making up the story as he went along,

"and he wanted to put a yellor sign on the door, and that wouldn't do be-

cause it was a boardin'-house and a yellor smallpox sign would scare away all the boarders. So me an' Ben was hired to move the house an' keep her movin'. The old health doctor had to get an order from the mayor permittin' him to put up the yellor sign, you see, and he had to give the house number. So as soon as 'twas found out he'd got an order to put up a sign on No. 11 Kinwiller Street, me an' Ben was sent for to move the house and we kept it movin'. Every time the doctor got to the house with his order, the house wouldn't be where the order said to put up the sign. Yep, that's how 'twas!"



"Lo, Gubb!" said Hod McGuffy.
"Watcha deteckatin' to-day?"

"But where at did you leave the house when you finally ended moving it from one place it was at to elsewhere?" insisted Mr. Gubb.

"Why," said Hod McGuffy, his eyes taking that keenly suspicious look that indicates that a liar thinks his word is being doubted, "—why, we took it back where we got it from. That's where it is now."

That is the way a prevaricator does. He lugs in some truth to prove that his lies are truth. This was the only truth Hod McGuffy had uttered, and Philo Gubb doubted it.

"It aint there at that location now," he said.

Hod McGuffy's red face turned still redder. He flared into righteous anger. For the first time in years he had uttered a plain, simple, clean truth—and this was what he got for it; he was as good as called a liar!

"Why, you crazy wall-paper-sticker!" he shouted. "What you mean by talkin' like that to me? I ought to know where that old Kinwiller house is. It's right exactly where it always was; that's where it is, and don't you dare say what I say aint so when I say it is!"

"It aint—" began Philo Gubb. "I looked last night, and—"

"Why, that there old Kinwiller house," began Hod in an offended tone, "has been settin' there at Number 11 Kinwiller Street since—" He stopped short. Now that he had temporarily departed from the straight path of prevarication, he meant to be precise in every word: "It has been settin' there at what *was* Number 11 Kinwiller Street ever since it was built. You can go up there on Fifth Street and see it right now; Susan Connors is runnin' a boarding-house in it the same as she has been for years, ever since old Mis' Anna Kinwiller died. Number 11 Fifth Street it is, and—"

"I thought I heard you remark to say it was Kinwiller Street," said Philo Gubb scornfully. "First off it was Kinwiller Street, and now it is Fifth Street, and—"

"Well, so 'twas!" cried Hod McGuffy with vexation. "It was Kinwiller Street

until the city council changed all the street names, back in 1906. It was Kinwiller Street until the city took the names off of all the named streets and numbered them from the river back. I guess," he said scornfully, "you went and looked at new Kinwiller Street, that little sort of an alley place where Ben hauls gravel from and that the city stuck the name of Kinwiller onto so the Kinwillers wouldn't be totally forgot. I guess that's where you looked, Mr. Smart Aleck!"

MR. GUBB turned his head on one side as if the information had gone in at one ear and he was letting it soak into his brain. He recalled that Mrs. Connors' boarding-house was indeed a two-and-a-half-story frame structure. He recalled that it was indeed a Number 11. He recalled having heard that all the named streets running parallel with the river had been changed to numbered streets at the time the boom was expected. He gathered his skirts in his hand and turned.

"Here! Where you goin'?" asked Hod McGuffy, as the crowd parted to make way for Mr. Gubb.

"I got some client patrons up to the house at Number 11 Fifth Street that's tryin' to find the house they're in and can't find it," said Mr. Gubb hastily, "and I got to go up there and find it for them before they find out it is. I'd take pleasure in stopping to remain to apologize completely and in full," he added, "but if I get up there before they find out that the house they're into is the one they're in, it means twenty dollars per each floor and ten dollars per the half story for me, and business is business into the detectakative line!"

Hod McGuffy shook his head.

"Crazy as a loon!" he exclaimed. "Crazier than old Roth was in them days when he had the city council appoint a Committee on Renaming Streets because he thought Riverbank was goin' to be as big as London!"

And thus, without knowing it, he brings your attention back to the gentlemen named in the first paragraph of this truthful tale.

Another Philo Gubb story in the May issue.



Nan Farley, the heroine

The Previous Chapters of "The Proof of The Pudding."

Ohio in a flood. She was rescued by Tim Farley, a wealthy pioneer of an inland city, adopted by him, and brought up with every advantage as his own daughter. But in the blossom of young womanhood she is not the delight to him that she might have been. She is a mimic and clever, and much sought after by the "smart set" which Farley hates. And more, Billy Copeland, who it is rumored has divorced his wife so he may marry Nan and her prospective money, has been encouraged by the girl.

Farley is an invalid, making new wills constantly as Nan pleases him or displeases him. He has forbidden her to see Copeland again. Nan promises, then slips away one day to a luncheon at the country club, where Copeland is to be. She amuses the gay company with an imitation of old Farley's querulousness at doctors, till suddenly she is overcome by remorse, leaves and goes down to the near-by river to be alone. There she notices a young man practising fly casting. He breezily introduces himself as Jerry Amidon, a youth who has come from the same Ohio River town where she had been born. He amuses the girl and she allows him to talk to her.

"I broke from the home plate when I was sixteen, and arrived in a freight-car," he tells her. "I now swing a sample case down the lower Wabash for the well-known house of Copeland-Farley."

In their talk Nan learns that John Eaton, the most fastidious man in town and an able lawyer, is interested in Jerry.

IN this new novel, Meredith Nicholson writes the charming story of an impulsive girl whose inclination is to "wobble to the wrong" but fights till she can "wobble to the right," and he does it so easily and naturally that you feel as if he were telling of the folks next door.

Nan Farley has Irish eyes and the Irish temperament. At ten she lived in a shanty which went sailing down the

When she meets Eaton again she tells him of her early acquaintance with Jerry. Eaton is at once interested in her because of her frankness.

THAT night Farley learns of Nan's disobedience and tells her that if she meets Copeland again there will be no money for her. The girl cajoles him into a better humor and again promises to keep away from Copeland and the "smart" people of the town. She really intends keeping her promise and pays more attention to Farley.

She meets Fanny, Copeland's divorced wife, who is a pretty, able woman, making a success of a dairy farm. Fanny is gracious to Nan and stirs in the girl a new sense of unworthiness. Eaton notices all this, says a quiet word here and there, and Nan finds herself invited to social affairs by "old families" who had dropped her.

Meanwhile Copeland is drinking steadily, not attending to business and becoming seriously involved. While he is facing ruin his cast-off wife inherits two hundred thousand dollars. But he makes no move to conciliate her, for Farley has more than a million to leave Nan. He is anxious to make up with her, and a chance bit of waywardness on Nan's part makes this possible. Nan discovers a will made by Farley in which she is left less than a tenth of what she has expected. The rest is given to charity. She meets Copeland, who urges her to an immediate marriage. He believes that after the thing is done, Farley will forgive them, and give them his fortune. But he is drunk the night they are to elope and Nan goes home from the trysting place in disgust. Jerry Amidon, who admires her whole-heartedly and is a confidential clerk of Copeland's, gets back her suit-case to her and cheers her in her unhappiness.

That night Farley dies. Nan is sincerely grief-stricken. Copeland calls and tells her if there is no will found she will inherit all her foster father's wealth. This insinuation inspires her to hunt out the hidden documents, but her better self keeps her from burning them as she was tempted to do. And next day she finds that a trick lawyer and cousins of Farley's are to contest the validity of her adoption. They also threaten to contest any will Farley may have made, on the ground that he was of unsound mind. Eaton calls and tells Nan not to worry about that, as Farley was not only sound—but keen-minded. Nan is so grateful for Eaton's constant kindness that she confesses her temptations to burn the wills. Eaton then tells her that he has long worried about her, and Nan is happier than she has ever been that she "wobbled right."

The Proof Of The Pudding

A Fine American Novel

By Meredith Nicholson

Author of "The House of A Thousand Candles," etc.



Mrs. Copeland

ILLUSTRATED BY C. H. TAFFS

CHAPTER XX

THE COPELAND-FARLEY CELLAR

AT twelve o'clock on the night of Nan's prolonged struggle, Jerry, having walked to the station with a traveling man of his acquaintance, paused at the door of Copeland-Farley, hesitated a moment and then let himself in. He whistled a warning to the watchman as was his habit when making night visits to the establishment. Hearing no response, he assumed that the man was off on his rounds and would reach the lower floor shortly.

He opened his desk and busied himself with some memoranda he had made from the books that afternoon. There was no denying that the house was in a bad way; the one hundred thousand dollars of notes carried by the Western National matured the next day, and in addition to these obligations the Company was seriously behind in its merchandise accounts.

A quarter of an hour passed, and the watchman made no sign. Jerry closed his desk, walked back to the elevator-shaft and shouted the man's name. From the dark recesses of the cellar came sounds as of some one running, followed by a stumble and fall. He called again, more loudly, but receiving no response ran to the stairway, flashed on the lights and hurried down.

His suspicions were aroused at once by a heap of refuse, surmounted by half

a dozen empty boxes, piled about the wooden framework of the elevator-shaft.

The room where oils and other inflammables were stored was shut off from the remainder of the cellar by an iron door that had been pushed open. As he darted in and turned on the lights, he heard some one stealthily moving in the farther end of the room.

Seizing a fire extinguisher to use as a weapon, he bawled the watchman's name again and plunged in among the barrels. A trail of straw indicated that the same hand that had piled the combustibles against the shaft had carried similar materials into the dangerous precincts of the oil-room. In a moment he came upon a barrel of benzine surrounded with kindling.

He decided against calling for help. No harm had yet been done and it was best to capture the guilty person and deal with him quietly if possible. He kicked the litter away from the barrel and waited. In a moment a slight noise attracted his attention, and at the same instant a shadow vanished behind an upright cask. He waited for the shadow to reappear, advancing cautiously down the aisle with his eyes on the cask.

"Come out o' that!" he called.

A foot scraped on the cement floor and definitely marked the cask as the incendiary's hiding place. He jumped up on a barrel, leaped from it to the cask and flung himself upon a man crouched behind it. They went down together with Jerry's hand clutching the captive's throat.

"Good God!" he gasped, as he found himself gazing into Copeland's eyes.

The breath had been knocked out of Billy and he lay still, panting hard. His right hand clenched a revolver.

"Give me that thing!"

Jerry snatched it from Copeland's convulsive clutch, thrust it into his coat pocket and stood erect.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he said.

"Came near shootin' you, Jerry," drawled Copeland, sitting up and passing his hand slowly across his face, "—damn near! Gimme your hand."

Jerry drew him to his feet. He rested heavily on the cask and looked his employee over with a slow, bewildered stare.

"Might 'a' known I couldn't pull 'er off! Always some fool like you buttin' into my business. 'S my business! Goin' do what I please with my business. Burn whole thing down 'f want to. I'm incen-jy—what you call 'em?—incen-jy-ary,—what you call 'em—pyromaniac. Go to jail and pentenshary firs' thing I know."

"Not this time," said Jerry sternly. "I'm going to take you home."

"Home? Whersh that?" asked Copeland, grinning foolishly.

"Well, I guess a Turkish bath would be better. Where's Galloway?"

"Galloway's good fellow; reli'ble watchman. Wife's sick; sent him home with my comp'ments. Told 'im I'd take full responsibility."

"You didn't expect to collect the insurance on that story, did you? You must have a low opinion of the adjusters. I'll fire Galloway to-morrow for leaving you here in this shape."

"Not on yer life y' wont! Silly old man didn't know I wuz loaded. Came on me sud'ly—very sud'ly. Only had six slocktails—no; thass wrong; thass all wrong. You know what I mean. Effect un-usual—mbs' unusual. Just a few small drinks at club. Guess I can't carry liquor's graceful-ly as I used to. Billy Copeland's no good any more. Want lie down. Good place on floor. Nice bed right here, Jerry. Lemme go t' sleep."

He grasped the edge of the cask more firmly and bent his head to look down at the heap of straw he had been plant-

ing round it when Amidon interrupted him.

"Not much I wont! But before we skip I've got to clean up this trash. Steady now; come along!"

He seized Copeland's arm and forced him to the stairway, where he left him crumpled on the bottom step.

"No respec' for head of house; no respec' whatever," Copeland muttered.

Jerry bade him remain quiet, and began carrying the straw and boxes back to the packing room. He swept the floor clean, and when he was satisfied that no telltale trace remained, he got Copeland to the counting-room and telephoned for a taxi.

"Goin' to be busted to-morrow—clean smash. You made awful mistake Jeremiah, in not lessing—no, not lesting me burn 'er up. Insurance'd help out consid'ble. Need new building anyhow."

"I guess we don't need it that bad," remarked Jerry, rolling a cigarette.

NOW that the calamity had been averted, his anger abated somewhat. Copeland's condition mitigated the hideousness of the crime he was about to commit. Jerry had not seen him intoxicated since the night of the police raid at the Whitcomb House, and he had been assuring Eaton that Copeland had given up drink.

"Guess you're dis'appointed in your boss, Jeremiah. Don' blame you. Drunken fool—awful fool—incen-jy-ary; no end bad lot."

"Put your hat on straight and forget it," remarked Jerry.

He telephoned to Gaylord, an athletic trainer who conducted a Turkish bath, and told him to prepare for a customer. He knew Gaylord well, and when they reached his place Jerry bade him stew the gin out of Copeland and be sure to have him ready for business in the morning. While Copeland was in the bath, Jerry tried all the apparatus in the gymnasium and had a go at boxing with Gaylord's assistant. After all the arts of the establishment had been exercised upon Copeland and he was disposed of for the night, Jerry went to bed.

In the morning Gaylord put the finishing touches on his patient and turned

him out as good as new. It had occurred to Amidon that Copeland might decide to avoid the store that day. He was relieved when he announced, after they had shared Gaylord's breakfast, that he would walk to the office with him.

"Guess I'll give the boys a jar by showing up early," he remarked.

IT was a clear, bracing morning, and Copeland set a brisk pace. He was stubbornly silent and made no reference to the night's affair until they reached the heart of the city. Then he stopped

suddenly and laid his hand on Jerry's arm.

"Jerry, I never meant to do that; for God's sake, don't believe I did!" he broke out hoarsely. "I was troubled about the business, and some other things had worried me lately. I took too many drinks—and I'd never meant to go back to it! I wouldn't have done it, sober—I wouldn't have had the nerve!"

"It was the drink, of course," Jerry assented. "It's all over now. You'd better forget it; I'm going to!"

"I wish to God I could forget it!"



Nan wore his rose pinned to her sweater. There was something very nice about Jerry, he was so unobtrusively thoughtful and helpful. And he was almost as keen in his way as Eaton was in his.

Copeland shrugged his shoulders impatiently, then drew himself erect and walked on more quickly. Jerry cheerfully changed the subject and when they were near the store dived into an alley that led to the rear door of Copeland-Farley to avoid appearing before the clerks in Copeland's company.

Copeland remained in his room all morning, summoning the auditor from time to time to ask for various data. He called Jerry once and bade him make every effort to find Kinney by telephone. Kinney was in New York and had been there for a week. Copeland smiled sardonically.

"All right. I knew he'd been away, but the fool said he'd be back to-day," he said spitefully. "That's all!"

At two o'clock he put a bundle of papers into his pocket and walked toward the Western National. The bookkeepers exchanged meaningful glances and Jerry imagined that even the truckmen loading freight appeared depressed. Copeland's desperation had been expressed vividly enough in his drunken attempt to burn the store. And now if the Western National refused to extend his loans, Copeland-Farley might cease to exist. Jerry's usual nonchalance left him. He failed to seize a chance to "land" on a drummer from a New York perfumery house who was teasing him for the latest news of Main Street.

At three o'clock Eaton called Jerry on the telephone.

"I want to see Copeland; please call me the minute he comes in," said the lawyer.

Eaton's sudden interest in Copeland surprised Jerry, who had not ceased to wonder at the lawyer's first and only visit to the store two weeks earlier.

Shortly before four Copeland came back and walked directly to his own office. There was another exchange of glances along the accountants' desks, where the men bent with affected diligence over their books.

The auditor was summoned again, carried a book into Copeland's room and reappeared instantly. The air was tense. It was a source of relief to Jerry to hear Eaton's voice as he reported Copeland's return.

"Watch him," said the lawyer with his usual calmness; "and don't let him leave the store."

As Jerry nervously watched the door for Eaton's appearance, Louis M. Eichberg of Corbin & Eichberg entered the store and asked for Copeland. The bookkeepers exchanged glances again and bent over their ledgers with renewed zeal. The door of the private office closed upon Eichberg. It snapped shut sharply—ominously, Jerry thought.

CHAPTER XXI

A SOLVENT HOUSE

"I'VE bought in your stock," Eichberg was saying to Copeland. "You put up two hundred and forty-five shares with the Western National, and I've bought 'em in at private sale under your collateral agreement. As I understand it, there are five shares held by employees to qualify as directors. I guess there won't be any trouble about them, and we'll let 'em stand for the present."

"Those men paid for their stock and you have no right to touch it," said Copeland. "The stock in this company has an actual value of two hundred dollars a share; I hope you don't think I'm going to stand by and let the Western sell me out in this high-handed fashion! It's a frame-up, a conspiracy, to clean me out. I've still got a majority of the stock and I'll give you a run for your money before you get through with me!"

"Keep your temper, Copeland! I don't like doing this, but it's better for me to have the business than to let it peter out, the way it's doing. I'll even say that after we consolidate I'll be glad to make a place for you in the house."

"Oh, you needn't trouble!" returned Copeland hotly. "You're not going to get rid of me so easily!"

"All right; just how much stock do you think you've got?" asked Eichberg with a faint ironic smile.

"I've got two hundred and fifty shares; the bank understood that when I refused their demand for a majority," Copeland replied, frowning over the stock-ledger.

"That shows how much you know about your own business! There's ten shares out of your half that I've been trying to lay my hands on for two months. It was a deal Farley made the last year he was down here, with a Fort Wayne jobber named Reynolds, that he bought out after your father died. I know because we tried to buy up Reynolds ourselves, but old Uncle Tim went us one better. There wasn't much to the business, but the good will was worth something, and Farley let Reynolds have ten shares just to beat us out of the sale. Farley had sense! When Reynolds died, his executor sold the stock to somebody here. Foreman handled it but he won't tell me who he sold to. I know you didn't get it! Foreman says he spent a month last summer lookin' for you to give you a chance to buy the stock but he couldn't get hold of you. You were always off sportin' with Kinney!"

Copeland had forgotten about the Reynolds shares. He mentally cursed Farley for not reminding him of them; Farley had never dealt squarely with him! Very likely he had personally told Eichberg and the Western National of the Reynolds shares. It was galling to be obliged to learn from Eichberg things he should have known himself. He had flattered himself that, in persuading the bank to accept two hundred and forty-five shares as collateral instead of the majority for which demand had been made at first, he had shown his business sagacity; but evidently Eichberg had known of the Reynolds shares all along.

"I don't intend that what's left of this business shall go to the bad," Eichberg was saying. "Either you come to terms, and let 'em know outside that we've arranged a merger in a friendly way, or I'll call up my lawyer and tell him to apply for a receiver."

Outside, the interested and anxious clerks and stenographers, cold with excitement, watched their associate Mr. Jeremiah Amidon, who was inviting the wrath of the gods by knocking upon Copeland's door. When he entered in response to an angry bellow, they expected to see him reappear instantly, possibly at the end of William B. Copeland's foot. To their chagrin Amidon

remained in the private office for some time; and they judged from the sudden quiet that followed his disappearance that he was exerting a calming influence upon Copeland and his visitor.

"I BEG your pardon," Jerry remarked while Copeland and Eichberg glared.

To Copeland the sight of Jerry was an unwelcome reminder of the previous night. His remorse over his effort to burn the store vanished; if it hadn't been for this meddlesome cub, he wouldn't now be entertaining Eichberg in his office!

"Well, what does the boy want?" demanded Eichberg, when Copeland found it impossible to express his wrath at Jerry's intrusion.

Eichberg knew Jerry perfectly well; everybody in the street did. It was the basest insult to refer to him as "the boy."

"Excuse me, Mr. Eichberg! I just wanted to hand a memorandum to Mr. Copeland."

He drew from his pocket the certificate he had purchased from Foreman, and handed it to Copeland, who snatched it from him with an angry snarl.

"Where did you get this?" he asked faintly after a glance at the paper.

"Oh, it just blew in my way early in the fall. I never bothered to get a new certificate but I'll turn it in right now."

He pulled out a fountain pen, removed the cap deliberately and wrote his name below the executor's endorsement.

This done, he brushed an imaginary speck from his cuff, as he had seen Eaton do, and went out, closing the door softly.

"Well, here's the answer, Eichberg," said Copeland with affected nonchalance: "here are those Reynolds shares."

"How did that blame little fool get this?" demanded Eichberg after a careful scrutiny of the certificate and endorsement.

"Oh, he's a useful little fool! He's always picking up something," replied Copeland coolly.

"I suppose it was all set up," Eichberg sneered. "Why didn't you come right out and say you had that stock, and save

my time? It's worth something, if yours aint! You'll either sell me that stock or I'll have the court throw you out. It's up to you!"

"I told you the truth about these shares," said Copeland, whose good humor was returning. "I'm ashamed to say I'd clean forgotten them; but you see stock never figured much in our corporation; it's always been a sort of family affair. I have no idea where Amidon got Reynolds' shares—that's straight! He's always doing something he isn't paid for. And you see it isn't quite so easy to clean me out. But I take off my hat to you; you're a business man!"

Hope had risen in him. In spite of his futile efforts to tide over the crisis, there was still the remote chance that Kinney, who always seemed able to borrow all he wanted for his own purposes, might extend a helping hand. His change of manner had its effect on Eichberg.

"The stock doesn't cut any ice," he fumed. "I'm not goin' to have a hundred thousand dollars in a concern that's losin' money like this one! That statement you showed the bank was rotten. You aint got any credit; and you know mighty well you can't go on here. You'll either come to terms or I'll get a receiver to-morrow. That's all there is of that!"

He clapped on his hat and turned to the door just as it opened upon Eaton.

"I'll look in again in the morning, Copeland," said Eichberg in a loud tone. "You just think over that matter, and I guess you'll see it my way."

"Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day," remarked Eaton, projecting himself into the office. "I'll close the door if you don't mind, Copeland. And, Mr. Eichberg, please wait a moment."

"If you're his lawyer, you don't want me here. I've said all I got to say to Copeland," Eichberg answered; but he waited, glowering at Eaton, who removed his overcoat, placed it carefully on a chair and began drawing off his gloves.

"Mr. Eichberg, they told me a moment ago at the Western National, that certain stock held as collateral for maturing Copeland-Farley notes had

been bought by you. Is that true?"

"That's correct! I guess it was all regular," Eichberg snapped.

"We'll come to that presently. You have now in your possession through that purchase two hundred and forty-five shares of stock?"

"Right!" ejaculated Eichberg loudly.

Eaton raised his hand, glanced intently at the palm and then, with one of his familiar tricks, bent his gaze directly at Eichberg.

"And being a competitor of Copeland-Farley and a director of the bank, you have naturally—quite naturally—thought it would be a good investment to own a large block of the stock? And it undoubtedly occurred to you that a combination of Copeland-Farley with Corbin & Eichberg would be highly advantageous? In fact, you thought you had more stock than Copeland owns and that you could come in here and discharge him like a drayman!"

"That's my business! You haven't explained yet how you come to be buttin' in here."

"Presently—presently!" replied Eaton soothingly.

His calm demeanor and quiet tone further infuriated Eichberg, who breathed hard for a moment and then pointed a stubby forefinger at the lawyer as his wrath found utterance.

"Copeland-Farley's ruined—busted! If you'll take a look at their last statement you'll see they can't pull out!"

"You anticipate me," replied Eaton gently. "The fact is I had meant to buy that stock myself, but the bank's anxiety to turn it over to you has spoiled that. I was annoyed—greatly annoyed—when I found awhile ago that the stock had been sold—sold, in violation of the stipulation—on the bank's usual pledge—that three days' grace were to be given to the debtor to release his collateral. I don't believe the Comptroller would like that. I shall consider seriously bringing it to his attention."

"What good would three days have done him?" cried Eichberg. "The sooner he's put out, the better. His accounts payable are goin' to bring his general creditors down on him in a few days! Don't you suppose I know? Haven't

they been telegraphin' me from all over the country for months askin' about this house!"

"And, of course," said Eaton softly, "you did all you could to protect your competitor—neighborly feeling, and that sort of thing. Well, it will be a great relief to you to know that those accounts will be paid to-morrow—just as soon as the exchange window of your piratical bank is opened. There's a hundred thousand dollars to the credit of Copeland-Farley over there right now. I know, because I went in a quarter of an hour ago and made the deposit. This house is solvent—absolutely solvent! Moreover, Copeland's stock in the Kinney Ivory Cement Company is now marketable. I take some pride in that fact myself—immodestly, I dare say, and yet—I am only human!"

He drew a telegram from his waistcoat pocket and tossed it to Copeland.

"That patent case was decided to-day—in favor of Kinney. Copeland, I congratulate you!"

Copeland read the message and looked dully from Eaton to Eichberg. He was roused by Eichberg, who had no difficulty in expressing his emotions.

"You fool!" he shouted, shaking his fist in Eaton's face. "If you're tellin' the truth, what you mean to do about my stock!"

Eaton was drawing on his gloves without haste. His face expressed the mildest surprise at Eichberg's perturbation.

"My dear Mr. Eichberg, you were in such a rush to buy the Western's collateral that I'm surprised that you should trouble me—a casual acquaintance—with such a question."

"It's a cheat; it's a swindle! If there's any law for this—"

He flung out of the office and tramped heavily to the front door, while the clerks, worn with the many agitations of the day, stared after him mutely.

"In the morning," Eaton was saying to Copeland, "I'll have fuller details of the decision, but there's no doubt about it—we've won on every point. Allow me to congratulate you!"

Copeland half rose to take his proffered hand; then with a groan he sank back and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER XXII

NULL AND VOID

"T"HOSE documents have a familiar look," remarked Thurston with a smile as Nan placed the packet of wills on the table beside him in the Farley parlor. "Mr. Farley was hard to please; I've learned a lot about will-writing just from studying the different plans he proposed from time to time."

Nan described the manner in which she had found the wills on the night of Farley's death.

"He was evidently troubled about them and got out of bed to look them over. This one, that I found lying open on the table, is torn across as though he had begun to destroy it when the end came."

"Very likely that was his intention," Thurston replied. "I had just written a new will for him, but it wasn't signed—not unless he executed it that same afternoon. Perhaps you know about that?"

"No one was here, I'm sure," said Nan after a moment's consideration. "The nurse was off duty; she left at four o'clock for the evening and I'm sure the servants weren't in his room. I carried up his dinner tray myself."

"It's hardly possible he had signed that last will. I was always present on such occasions and I got the witnesses. When I called now and then with a couple of his friends, or telephoned for them, there was a will to be signed. You probably understood that."

He began opening the papers, glancing quickly at the last sheet of each will, and turning them face down on the table. The torn one he scrutinized more carefully, and returned to it for further examination when he had disposed of the others. Nan watched him nervously. He was a small, slight man of sixty, with a stiff gray mustache and a sharp, rasping voice. It would not have been easy to deceive Thurston if she had destroyed the wills; she could never have gone through with it!

She felt that she had touched with her finger-tips the far horizons and knew



Her resolution to tell Fanny of the last will and of all that lay back of it remained unshaken as the car bore her home-
window upon the

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ward
gray



ward. It was the only "square" thing to do, she repeated to herself over and over again, as she looked out of the car
gray winter landscape.

at last something of the meaning of life. She had subjected herself to pitiless self-analysis and stood convicted in her own conscience of vanity, selfishness and hardness. The recollection of her gay adventures with the Kinneys and her affair with Copeland had become a hideous nightmare. Not only was she ashamed of her dallying with Billy but she accused herself of having exerted a baneful influence upon him. In all likelihood he would never have sunk so low as to propose the destruction of Farley's wills but for his infatuation.

Farley's death had in itself exercised a chastening effect upon her. She was conscious of trying to see herself with his eyes and to fortify herself with something of the high-mindedness and stern righteousness that made him, in the retrospect, a noble and inspiring figure. The upturned faces at the Settlement haunted her: there was a work for her to do in the world if only she could lay her hands upon it! In this new mood the life of ease which money would secure weighed little against self-dependence and service. Money had ceased to be an important integer in her calculations.

Having concluded his examination of the papers, the lawyer lifted his head with an impatient jerk, then sighed and began smoothing the open sheets into a neat pile.

"Those wills are worthless, Miss Farley—not one of them can be probated. The testator's signatures and the names of the witnesses have been scratched out!"

In proof of his statement he extended one of the wills, pointing to the heavy criss-crosses at the bottom of the sheet.

"You have no idea when he did this—you weren't present, I suppose?"

"No; he used to do his writing at the table where he hid the wills. He occasionally wrote a letter or a check there; but I never saw him open the table. I never knew of that inner compartment till the night he died."

"Oh, I know that table very well; he had shown me the hidden drawer and explained how to open it. But this is most unfortunate, deplorable! I kept in touch with his doctor about his condition

and feared something like this might happen. And he dreaded it himself—was afraid he might die some time without leaving just the will he had determined to make. I account for all the wills I wrote for him but the last. The last time I was here I brought a new will, which I don't find among these. Are you sure you haven't overlooked it?"

She was quite sure of it, but after she had described in minute detail the events of the last afternoon of Farley's life, to confirm her statement that no one who could have acted as witness had visited Farley, she took the lawyer upstairs to examine the table for himself. They broadened the scope of the search, but without success.

"For the present I think it best for you not to read those wills," he said when they had returned to the parlor. "They represent Mr. Farley's changes of feeling in regard to many things—including yourself. A little later I shall be glad to submit them to you. The important thing just now is the threat of this man Harlowe to attack your rights under the adoption. Mr. Eaton and I have already discussed that. Now that we're pretty sure there's no will, this may give us some trouble, but with characteristic thoroughness Mr. Eaton has prepared for just this emergency. His reasons for not telling me earlier about these things are sound enough—his fear of disturbing Mr. Farley unnecessarily. He would undoubtedly have wanted a proceeding brought to correct the adoption, but that would only have advertised the error, and Mr. Farley might have died before we finished it. Still, if I had known, I should have taken care that he didn't die intestate. But from what Mr. Eaton tells me, this man is all primed to attack any will that might have been left, on the ground of Mr. Farley's insanity—which is ludicrous of course. There was never a saner man; and yet his eccentricities might be magnified before a jury—you never can tell. On the whole Mr. Eaton's silence was justified. But our next step must be carefully considered. In the meantime—"

He paced the floor for a moment.

Continued on page 1229 of this issue.



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Tears! from Flossie!
Again, without knowing
how it happened, Harold
found a girl in his arms,
and heard himself whispering words of love in her
ear. And even as he did
it, he blamed Martha.

HAROLD LAMBERT took a quick glance at his watch as he scurried downstairs to the dining-room. For though he was the admired leader of the young social set of Royal, who waited on his bidding, he had a job in the bank where he must be the one to wait. As Maggie, the cook, brought in his waffles, the telephone rang. Harold went on with his breakfast, but he motioned with his head toward the telephone, and cocked an inquiring eye at Maggie. She placed her hands on her hips.

"I won't answer it," she said firmly. "When your mother said would I do the work for you while she was gone, she didn't say I was to tell lies for you over the telephone."

"Well, good heavens, Maggie," said Harold, reasonably, "I can't tell the

lies myself, for that would give me away."

"I blame you," Maggie said severely. "Them girls is awful enough, beginning to call you up before breakfast itself, but you must have said things to them that gives them the right. For, once, they wasn't two better brought-up girls in town than Caroline Walton and Flossie Harlowe."

"Aw, go on, Maggie," said Harold, dropping his careful accent.

"I've one word to say," remarked Maggie, "and that is this: I've knew men of thirty wasn't the Lotharyoz you are—and the mother's milk not dry on your mouth!"

Harold's heart swelled so proudly at being called a Lothario that he forgave Maggie her real insult, which was the crying-down of his twenty-two years. Maggie left the room in response to the postman's ring, coming back hastily with a letter.

"It's from your mother," she said, "—with a New York postmark. So her ship must be in. When'll she get home?"

"Give it here," Harold said. He read industriously while Maggie peered over his shoulder.

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"Say, Maggie," he said, "she says she's staying over in New York, visiting cousin Anna Shore, and will bring Cousin Anna's daughter Martha for a visit, and that of course I remember Martha. Who the dickens is Martha?"

"Don't you remember that little girl that visited us the summer you were eight—the one that broke your tooth on you, smashing at your face with the rolling-pin?"

"That young imp!" said Harold indignantly. "Why, Mother packed her off home, and told her never, never to come back."

"Well, she probably won't smash your face now—and maybe she'll answer the telephone for you," Maggie said coldly.

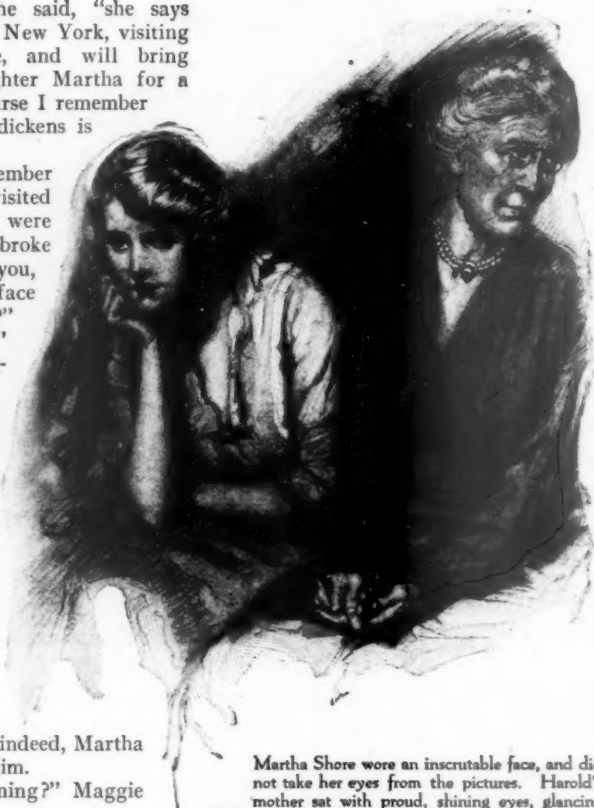
Harold's inhospitable brow cleared. Maggie had put it crudely, but perhaps, indeed, Martha could be of use to him.

"When're they coming?" Maggie asked.

"Doesn't say: Mother's got to do some shopping," mumbled Harold, over the last waffle.

PRESENTLY Harold left the house, his glasses with the black horn rims set jauntily on his narrow nose, his walk the assured gracious pace of a young and popular heir apparent. His gaze was pleasantly detached, but within he was busied with problems of weight. A few months before, he had had a confident center but a timorous outer surface; now his outer surface was something more than confident, but his center was verging toward timorousness. It was not that Harold did not believe in himself as fully as ever. Just a few weeks before, he had said to himself, quite arrogantly, a couplet he had picked up:

Time and I against all the world;
Chance and I against time and you.



Martha Shore wore an inscrutable face, and did not take her eyes from the pictures. Harold's mother sat with proud, shining eyes, glancing from the pictures to her boy. "This, my child, has done this thing," her adoring expression said, and that was just as Harold would have had it.

All very well; but if instead of one "you" there should be two, and if chance had the bad taste to side with them occasionally, where would Harold Lambert finally arrive? It was this question that Harold was asking himself as he walked negligently to the bank.

For from the beginning of his social success, he had found it hard to deal impartially with the subtle charms of blue-eyed Caroline Walton and pansy-eyed Flossie Harlowe. Caroline's sweet dependence lured him; Flossie's defiant piquancy stimulated him. And now, since he was topping his social success with a promise of literary success, matters were growing increasingly difficult. Harold had written a moving-picture play which had been staged and



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Caroline had too much of a proprietor-like expression to suit Harold.

was just ready for release; he had written other scenarios which had been accepted; and all this made Caroline and Flossie each more determined than ever to mark him for her own. Poor Harold felt that his problem of balancing surpassed that of any Japanese juggler in vaudeville.

"It was all right," he mused, "for them to feel as they did six months ago, and for me to feel as I did. But while I still adore them both, I wish they could see that it isn't *then*, it's *now*!"

This translated, meant that Harold was honestly keen to write, and wanted matters of sentiment to take a subordinate place in his life.

HAROLD quickened his step as he approached the bank. Big Bud Henderson, formerly the social leader of Royal's young set, met him at the door.

"Pretty nearly late, Leg o' Lamb," he said.

Harold was amused at the edge of bitterness in Bud's voice. Bud cared about Flossie Harlowe, and Flossie had smiled upon him till Harold had annexed all the limelight. Harold was about to make some telling retort when he recollected that Bud's maternal grandfather in Vermont was very ill.

"I hope you are getting better news from the East, Bud?" he said gently.

The sympathetic superiority of his tone maddened Bud, who murmured some wordless reply and went on. Harold, well content, entered the bank. He had scarcely taken his place at his desk when the telephone-bell rang.

"This is Caroline," a cooing voice said. "I knew Father wouldn't be at the bank to-day, and so I dared telephone."

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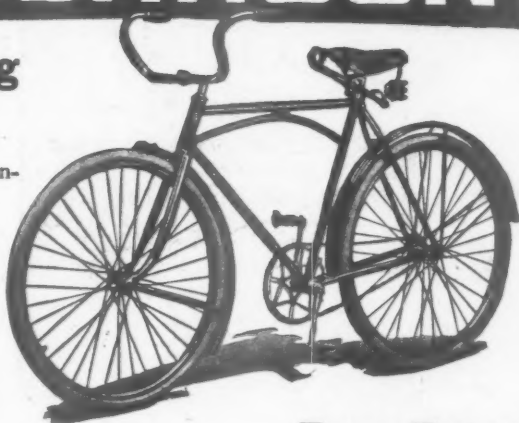
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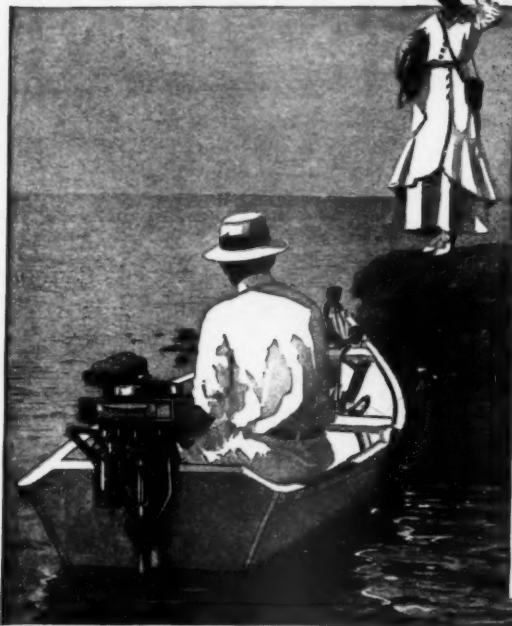
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Harold frowned; Caroline's father, the bank president, had decreed that Harold's admirers must call him up outside of bank hours. And here was Caroline taking advantage of inside information and getting ahead of poor Flossie. So dishonorable, and so feminine!

"I tried to get you this morning," went on Caroline, "but no one answered the telephone. Can you come down to-night, Harold? I must consult some one on a matter of great importance, and I need mature judgment."

Dear Caroline! Her reliance was touching.

"Delighted," Harold said.

THAT evening Harold entered the Walton living-room with a sense of coming into a conservatory. There were flowers everywhere, and Caroline herself was like a lily in her white gown. When she put her hand in his, and he looked down into her tender blue eyes, Harold wished that he could divide himself into two slightly uneven halves, the larger to go to Caroline.

"Where did you get all the flowers?" he asked, leading her to the divan which made the best background for himself. Caroline was so lovely that any background would answer for her.

"Oh—some one sent them," said Caroline, carelessly.

A jealous pang assailed Harold. No one in Royal had sent them, for the young men of Royal had rather steered away from Caroline since Harold had taken so much of her time. But Caroline had been to school in New York. Some New York creature!

"I must begin to talk to you at once, Harold," Caroline said, in a pensive tone, "for you may not want to spend the full evening here. Aunt Clara wants to take me with a party of other girls and two or three men on a Western trip. Oh, I don't mean just California,—that's nothing,—but the Hawaiian Islands, Japan and China."

As a matter of fact, Caroline's aunt had invited her, and her father had promptly refused to let her go. But Caroline had her own ideas about working up a situation.

"Of course if it were only a little

run of a couple of thousand miles," said Caroline, "I'd not trouble you with it. But if I should go, it would mean leaving Mother and Father for perhaps six months. What do you think is my duty, Harold?"

She turned her appealing eyes on him.

"Do you want to leave your parents and Royal for six months, Caroline?" asked Harold, in a deeply affronted tone.

He meant, really: "Do you want to leave *me*?" Caroline quite understood.

"Of course I want to go!" she said, in an animated voice. "Think of seeing the wonderful new places, wonderful new people!"

Harold looked at her reproachfully, but Caroline's eyes were fixed dreamily on distant horizons.

"What I want your judgment on," Caroline said softly, "is my duty in the matter. Is it my duty to broaden my mind by travel, and by contact with new people, or is it my duty to stay home with my family in tame old Royal?"

"A little intensive work on your mind in tame old Royal wouldn't hurt you, Caroline," said Harold, crisply.

Caroline's wide blue eyes slowly filled; a tear ran down her cheek.

"Why Harold, how can you speak to me so?" she murmured.

Tears always conquered Harold—and Caroline's tears! He took her hand.

"I am a brute," he murmured, and felt very literary as he said the word.

Caroline put her other hand on his arm and leaned toward him.

"Oh, no, no, you are not a brute. You are perfect, Harold," she said, in a voice of ineffable sweetness. "And the only reason I want to leave Royal is that no one needs me here—no one!"

How this squared with her question of her duty to her parents, neither of them stopped to consider. Harold's responsive nerves were quivering to the pathos of her "no one;" his arms were tingling at her touch; and his senses were swimming a little under the combined attack of Caroline's eyes and the heavy sweetness of the flowers.

"Caroline! dear!" he cried. "I need you! If you were to go, Royal would be a wilderness."

"Oh, no one needs me," Caroline went on, like a mourning dove, "—no one, no one."

Harold never knew how it happened, but he found Caroline in his arms, and he heard his voice whispering lover-like things in her ear. Caroline struggled—not enough to get away, but quite enough to be convincing.

"Let me go," she cried. "You do not mean this. It is only your noble sympathy that has carried you away. You are a child, Harold."

If Harold had not been so swayed, he might have reflected that Caroline had a genius for making conflicting statements, which somehow carried. He was melted

when she spoke of his noble sympathy, and his man's vanity revolted when she called him a child. He guessed he knew what he was doing! It didn't occur to him that perhaps Caroline did too.

"Let me go," Caroline whispered; "let me go to the Hawaiian Islands—and Japan—and China."

"Never!" cried Harold, folding her to his bosom. "Never, Caroline. I love you, I need you, and you must never leave me."

Caroline put her arms around his neck.

"I never will," she murmured.

TWO hours later Harold walked home under the moon, humming love-songs. This was love and life. He was engaged, and no one in the wide world was quite so wonderful as Caroline, unless perhaps himself.

Caroline put her hand on his arm and leaned toward him. "Oh, no, no, you are not a brute. You are perfect, Harold," she said, in a voice of ineffable sweetness.



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His exalted mood lasted until well into the next morning. Then, lifting his eyes, he saw Flossie Harlowe entering the bank. He had not thought of Flossie since Caroline had first put her arms around his neck. It gave him a shock to think that Flossie could have so completely dropped from his mind. Then he got a second shock. For Flossie was dressed for traveling, and she carried a small Gladstone bag. She brought a check to be cashed.

"Why Flossie," Harold said, "are you going away?"

"Yes."

"But you didn't mention it to me night before last when I was with you."

"I only decided yesterday morning,"

Flossie replied, "and I have been busy ever since, packing."

Harold reflected. Could Caroline, under the seal of secrecy, have told Flossie of her engagement, and thus driven poor Flossie to seek solace in absence? There certainly was a look of saddened resignation about Flossie. But no; Caroline would not have told such a piece of news by telephone, especially when he and she had agreed that it was to be a dead secret. And if she had told it orally, it could have been only within an hour or two, and Flossie could never have had time, in the interim, to make up her mind to go away, and to pack, too.

"Are — are you taking a trunk, Flossie?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she replied, in a tone of faint surprise.

"Where — where are you going, Flossie?" Harold pursued.

The look of faint surprise on Flossie's face deepened. It was as if a casual acquaintance were, unexpectedly, expressing the intimacies of a friend.

"To New York," she said, in a polite tone.

"I'll miss you, Flossie," he said.

Flossie did not waver in the counting of her money.

"Shall you, Harold?" she asked quietly.

"Dreadfully," he said, with feeling.

"It was clear to him now — oh, perfectly clear. Flossie was doing the dignified, womanly thing; dear Flossie!

She was resigning; she would not compete with anyone. Without making it hard for Harold, she was going away to bear her grief in silence, and unobserved. Sweet, noble Flossie! Gone was her piquancy and her touch of shrewishness. She was all sweetness and patience and resignation. Harold gulped.

"I wish you weren't going," he said softly, quite forgetting Caroline. "I shall miss you dreadfully, Flossie, and count the days till you get back."

Flossie threw him a glance that began affectionately, and ended inscrutably. And then Harold remembered Caroline! Wretchedness fell upon him, and he scarcely lifted his eyes when Flossie went away.

So this was life! A man got engaged to one girl, and here was another, just as deserving. . . . And clinging Caroline, expecting so much of him. . . . And his heart just as much Flossie's — for all he knew, more so! . . . Life could certainly do dreadful things to a man! dreadful things!

ALL morning long, Harold's misery intruded into his work. He walked home for luncheon in a daze of unhappiness. When he had opened the front door, his mother threw her arms about his neck.

Greetings over, Harold saw, in the background, a small, pale, dark-eyed girl, with a coronet of yellow hair, and a quiet manner. Could this be Martha Shore, the wild buccaneer who had prematurely shed his milk-tooth for him? He remembered her as fat and tall, and wriggly-legged, with a loud, shrill voice that exercised itself constantly.

He shook hands with her, and she disconcerted him by saying, with a humorous quirk of her mouth:

"Oh, no; I'm really not half bad."

Harold reddened, hoping she was not going to be "smarty." But during the luncheon hour she behaved so discreetly and so self-effacingly that he decided she was very likable indeed.

That night he had promised to take Caroline to the moving-picture studio near Rochester, where, in the little private theater, his feature play, "A Mother's Love," was going to be run off



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preparatory to being released for presentation. Now, of course, his mother and Martha must be added to the party. He called Caroline on the telephone to tell her this. He spoke the words with a sense of relief, for somehow he did not want to be alone with Caroline.

"Why, that will be lovely," Caroline said sweetly; "any girl to whom a great man belongs ought to be proud to share him with the whole world, especially with the relative dearest to him."

Sweet Caroline! What a true sense of values she had! Ah, well, a man could not go wrong engaging himself to a girl like that—especially since he couldn't marry more than one, in any case.

A FEW hours later, however, Harold's attitude toward Caroline had again shifted. The party of four was sitting in the neat little theater, watching "A Mother's Love" being exposed on the small screen. Martha Shore wore an inscrutable face, and did not take her eyes from the pictures. Harold's mother sat with proud, shining eyes, glancing from the pictures to her boy. "This, my child, has done this thing," her adoring expression said, and that was just as Harold would have had it. But Caroline—Caroline had quite too much of a proprietor-like expression to suit Harold. "Our play," she said, "our work!"

Owned him, that's what she thought, by Jove! Owned him, body and soul, and that delicate part of him that produced moving-picture plays. Arrogance! Why, if it came to that, she hadn't even inspired him! Harold took his women home, inwardly glowering. All his mother's self-effacing praise could not remove the sting of Caroline's assumptions. Premature—that's what he had been in engaging himself. Besides, watching the play had given him several new ideas for work. He didn't want to spend his evenings making love to Caroline; he wanted to write.

Next morning Harold woke with the same mind. Going down to breakfast, his eye lighted on Martha's calm face. Good! He could explain to Caroline that on account of his mother's return,

and on account of his duty to his mother's guest, he would not be able to see much of her for a few days. Then he would not see her at all for at least a week, and would work like mad.

This he did; his mother saw little of him, and Martha almost nothing. Caroline grew more and more plaintive over the telephone.

"And this!" cried Harold. "This exacting creature is she who said she was ready to sacrifice herself to my work. And yet men continue to believe in women!"

ALL the young people, including Caroline and Bud Henderson, called on Martha. Bud seemed quite taken with her, but that, Harold reflected, was because he was getting ready to make Flossie jealous, and win her back. Ah, well, perhaps he could, now. Caroline's call was made in the evening, and Harold walked home with her. The moon was still at work, and also his conscience, and also Caroline's sweet lure, and the end of the evening found her quite restored to content.

The next day, when Martha had been in town a week, Mrs. Lambert gave a dance for her. Flossie Harlowe came back unexpectedly soon, a radiant Flossie, in a gown that was the last word in style. When Harold saw her entering, he felt an inward civil war, with a cowardly desire to flee the foes. Both girls were lovely, unthinkably lovely; both, he modestly thought, were his—but he was Caroline's, outwardly at least. Then his courage came back. He could get through this evening without danger, especially as he would be expected to sit at supper with Martha. Oh, he could manage.

And manage he did, up to supper-time, making ardent love to Caroline while they were dancing, and explaining how it irked him to pay any attention to anyone else; and making indirect love to Flossie, who was cool, and rather malicious, and distinctly responsive to the attentions of Bud Henderson. When Harold danced with Martha, he rested; she was only one of the family, and he didn't have to pay any attention to her.

When supper-time came, he had to go in search of her. He found her on the stairs, coming down with a fresh handkerchief in her hand, and with a freshly washed look in her eyes.

"What's the matter, Martha?" asked Harold, genuinely concerned.

The brown eyes, generally so inscrutable, flashed at him.

"Nothing," Martha said shortly.

"I'd be sorry if there was," Harold returned gently.

"Bluffer!" Martha said.

"Wh-what!" gasped Harold.

He remembered the time Martha had broken his tooth with a rolling-pin. That was her true character, and now it was showing again.

"Bu-luffer!" gritted Martha.

"Little girls of twenty are old enough not to be rude," he essayed.

"Four-flusher!" cried Martha, "—pretending to be nice to me when you haven't seen me all week. Playing with those two girls! I wonder you can fool them for one minute. You can't fool me, Harold Lambert! You pretend to be so free and easy, and you're scared as a rabbit. You pretend to be a man of the world, and you're just acting a part, and nervous as a witch for fear you may forget some of your lines! And the worst of it is that the game isn't worth the candle! You can write good movie-plays that would help people and please them both, but you prefer to imitate John Drew—rather badly. I despise you! Go and eat supper with some one that can't see through you! I'm going to tag along with Bud Henderson and Flossie Harlowe, if they'll have me."

She flounced past him, and Harold sank down weakly on the lowest step, staring after her with dropped jaw. This was his reward for treating her just as well as he knew how! Martha of the smashing blows! The idea of her being able to penetrate him like that! And besides, what she thought was false—or at least she should have felt that it couldn't be true. Well, he was done with her. He wished he were done with all girls. Six months before, he had been—well, negligible; at least, his friends had so regarded him. But at the very worst, they had never flouted

him, as Martha just had. Pique, of course; her own words proved that. Well, he'd show her!

But Harold was so reluctant to show her that he sat on the lowest step until Caroline came to get him. He walked beside her into the room where the refreshments were being served, with a shrinking desire to escape notice. Yet old habit kept him to his negligent superior walk, and held on his face a sophisticated smile. He saw that Caroline and he had refreshments in the neighborhood of Flossie, and only when Flossie said she must telephone for a cab, did he wake up to the fact that Bud Henderson was not present.

"Oh, yes," Flossie told him, "Bud had a message that his grandfather is much worse, and wants to see him. So of course he can't take me home. He's going on the three o'clock morning train."

"Every cab's taken," Harold said; "I'll drive you home in Mother's car."

"I think there would be room enough in my car for you, Flossie," offered Caroline hastily; "I'm taking three or four people home, but we can sit on each other's knees."

"I don't want to crush this dress," Flossie said sweetly; "at the same time, I don't want to trouble Harold."

"Oh, no trouble," said Harold, miserably conscious that Caroline thought he had blundered.

Well, two girls angry at him within five minutes, and Flossie cold as an iceberg, seemingly interested only in preserving her gown, and in Bud's travel eastward! He listened moodily while she described the details of the illness of Bud's relative, conscious that Martha was pointedly not looking at him, and that Caroline's eyes were by turns pensive and angry. Presently the dancing began again, and with a great effort Harold resumed what Martha would have called his pose.

It seemed ages to Harold before the party broke up. As he waited downstairs for Flossie, Martha passed him on her way upstairs.

"Good night, four-flusher," she said bitterly.

"Sp-spitfire!" muttered Harold.



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Men with tender faces find the rich lather of Resinol Shaving Stick delightfully soothing.

IN the little electric car, Flossie lost interest in her gown. She also lost her coldness. She resumed the expression of womanly resignation that had so touched Harold the day she went to New York.

"Harold," she said, in a tone of sad relinquishment, "I have decided to ask you not to call on me any more."

Harold could have taken this remark in many different ways, but he chose to consider it the last straw.

"Oh, very well," he said bitterly; "if you care to put an end to—to things without reason, that is your right, I suppose. But I shall never again believe in a woman's sincerity and kindness."

"You've had plenty of both from me!" flashed Flossie. "And I'm sick and tired of giving more than I get."

Then once more she became resigned and womanly.

"You are a much bigger person than I am, Harold," she said humbly; "you will make a great name for yourself. I shall watch your career with pride."

Harold had a picture of Flossie, sitting alone in a black gown, with her hair softly parted, reading of his successes, and thinking, sadly, of the days when they were young and happy together. He did not like the picture—possibly because it was entirely false to any-

thing in Flossie's nature. He felt suddenly tired and gloomy.

"I can do nothing without your—your inspiration," he said. "You always have been my great inspiration."

They harked back in thought to the days before Caroline came home from school, when Flossie was the adored of Harold—and never saw him. Suddenly Flossie put her handkerchief to her eyes.

Tears! from Flossie! Again, without knowing how it happened, Harold found a girl in his arms, and heard himself whispering words of "love in her ear. And even as he did it, he blamed Martha. "If she hadn't talked to me as if I were a criminal lunatic," he thought, "I wouldn't have needed the proof that Flossie believed in me."

Yes, Flossie believed in him—a little too much, as her words proved.

"Then you do love me?" she asked.

Harold thought of Caroline.

"Not with an earthly love," he said; "it's more a—a Dante and Beatrice sort of love—"

"Let me get out and walk home," said Flossie, with wild sobs. "I didn't understand that you were insulting me."

There was nothing for poor Harold to do but to assure her that his intentions were not only non-platonic but strictly honorable, leading to an engagement-ring. Flossie was the sort of girl who would have asked to see



"Four-flusher!" cried Martha, "—pretending to be nice to me when you haven't seen me all week. Playing with those two girls! I wonder you can fool them for one minute. You can't fool me, Harold Lambert!"



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the signature on the marriage-license.

IT was a wretched young man who drove the car back that night: engaged to two girls, both perfectly charming, and as worthy of him as girls could hope to be in this imperfect world; obliged to choose. . . . At his own front door he found a certain surcease from miserable embarrassment. His mother informed him that Martha's mother and one of the younger children were ill with typhoid fever, and that she was going to New York with Martha, to help take care of them.

"And to think,"
Mrs. Lambert
said, "that
after dear



Harold sank down weakly on the lower step.

Martha had slaved over those younger brothers and sisters as if they were her own, and hasn't had a holiday for years—to think she's called back at the end of a week!"

Harold had been quite unaware of Martha's virtues. He discounted them as his mother spoke—but he saw in her troubles a chance to get away and think over his own.

"I'm going with you, Mother," he said. "It's pretty near time for my vacation, anyhow. Mr. Walton would be thankful if I'd take it early. I can't have you leave me so soon again."

"You good boy," she said.

The good boy felt a little conscience-smitten, and added:

"I can take you around to the theaters and things, in the intervals of your nursing—Martha too, if she wants to come along."

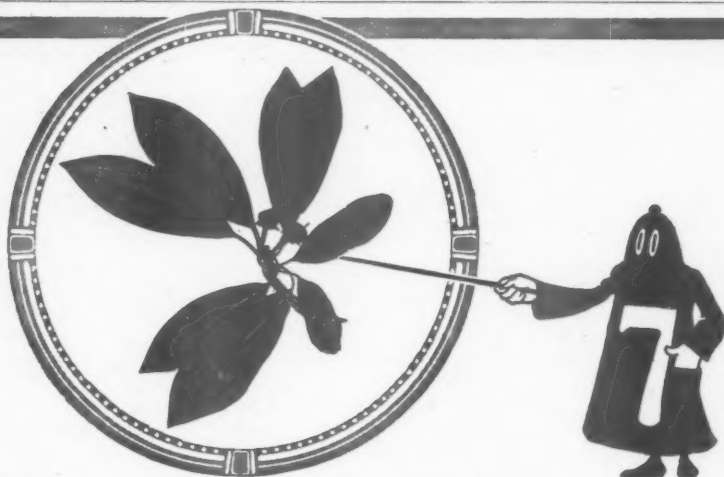
Footsteps sounded in the hall above, and Martha came downstairs, dressed for travel and carrying a suit-case. She was a pale, sad Martha, and Harold's rancor against her died.

"Cousin Mary," she said to Mrs. Lambert, "I can't wait for the morning train. You do, please. But I must go now, on this three o'clock train. Mr. Henderson will be on it, and he'll help me change cars at Buffalo."

A pang of resentment shot through Harold. Why did anyone in his household have to depend on Bud Henderson.

"We'll all go at three," he said recklessly. "We've got an hour. Go on and pack, Mother."

Harold spent then the busiest hour of his life. He took time to reflect that Martha must admire his efficiency—and that Flossie and Caroline would abhor it when they knew. Well, maybe Miss Martha Spitfire Shore would realize that bluffers and four-flushers were not accustomed to come up to the scratch as Harold Lambert had come. Perhaps this would teach her his true worth.



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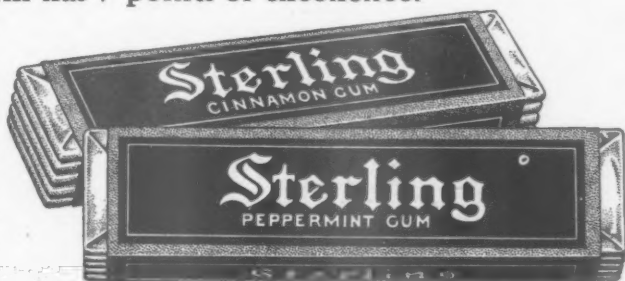
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HAROLD reached New York with a sense of lightness and freedom. He was quite away from Caroline and Flossie. He would have days and days in which to think how to deal with them. But the joyous mood was far from lasting. At the end of two weeks he was miserable, for now he was in a new difficulty, worse than his old.

He had lived, during those days, in an enforced intimacy with Martha. He had seen her tenderness with the sick ones of her family, her patience and wisdom with the sisters and brothers whom she was helping bring up, her capability in managing the house. He knew her bravery, her humor and sweetness. She didn't have the alluring dependence of Caroline; she didn't have the dash and daring of Flossie. But would Caroline have had the skill to be nurse, mother and financial manager? Would Flossie have had the patience? Would either of them have had the unselfishness?

Harold, to his dismay, found himself in love with Martha; and this time he knew it was the real thing. He had begun by being angry with her because she had seen through his pose; he had ended by admiring her for it. Pulled the wool over everyone's eyes, he had, except hers. Well, here he was and there were Flossie and Caroline. And for the matter of that, there was Martha—hating him, no doubt. Whatever she thought of him, he'd show her that at heart he was brave.

So one spring night, when the grass was sure of its green and the lilacs were budding, he took her for a walk in Central Park, and began a speech he had carefully prepared.

"Martha," he said, "you've pointed me out my weakness, but I'm going to prove to you that I'm not a coward. I am a fool. I've posed, and I've philandered, and I've got myself engaged to two girls. I don't love either of them, and I do love you. I am going to get released from them, somehow; and then I'm going to spend as many years as you like, proving to you that I can get over folly. I shall go on loving you always, and you may do just what you like with me: flout me again, or be kind to me; be my friend, or my—my sweetheart. I'm just in your hands."

It was the sincerest love-speech Harold had ever made, despite its lack of love-words, and its stumbling delivery. Martha had not helped bring up a family without becoming a judge of character. She sat down on a convenient bench and began softly to weep.

"Oh, don't," said Harold. "If you are offended—"

"I'm not offended," said Martha; "but—but I couldn't bear to have you throw yourself away on them."

"Then—then I may hope?" Harold whispered.

Martha nodded.

"Just as soon as you get rid of them. And oh Harold, it was dreadful of me to say what I did to you in Royal. It was because I was jealous, I suppose. For you *don't* pose—not a bit of it. And you're not a bluffer; you—you just know how to master people. And you're not a four-flusher; you—you just have a variety of moods, as a writer should. I think you're the most wonderful person in the world."

So much for what love could do by way of adding the judgment of a sensible girl! Harold preened the feathers of his vanity. Slowly the self-confidence she had wounded puffed into its old semblance. Dear little girl; she had made an error in judgment, that was all. And so they talked, incoherently, happily, paving the way for the smooth course of love by putting Harold back on his pedestal, and by giving Martha a judicious position as admiring mate.

"But—but how will you arrange with Flossie and Caroline?" asked Martha anxiously.

"Leave it to me," said Harold boldly, albeit his interior economy quaked with apprehension whenever he thought of his other two fiancées.

"I dread to think of their suffering," Martha murmured.

"They will have to bear it," said Harold, with vicarious bravery.

HAROLD'S mother arranged with the bank for an extension of his vacation, and Harold and Martha began the first delightful period of their engagement. For Harold it was not an unclouded time. Martha's seeking eyes

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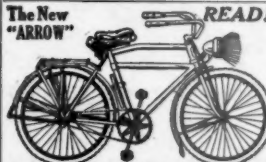
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asked him every day if he had arranged with Caroline and Flossie yet. And he had been able to think of no way.

On his departure from Royal, he had had Maggie, the maid, telephone them, in his mother's name, that the Lamberts were called to New York by serious illness. But he had not written them. From Flossie he had heard nothing. From Caroline he had had three letters, the first devoted, the second plaintive, and the third dignified and wondering, but giving him a chance to explain. He had not been able to make up his mind how to solve his two-sided problem.

One warm spring morning, it settled itself for him. He came down early, noticed that the mail had been placed on the hall table, and took his own. When he saw a letter from Caroline and another from Flossie, he retreated to his own room with them. He opened Caroline's first, feeling that he owed that much to her, since he had been engaged to her first. It read:

Dear Mr. Lambert:

I wish you to know that all is at an end between us. I have, for the sake of old sentiment (oh Harold, that you should be so unworthy!)—I have concealed your deficiencies from my parents. They, poor credulous ones, think that you and I are too young to know our own minds, and they are sending me on that trip to Honolulu, to see how foolish I have been. I see it without going, but I'm going. Besides, you'll never be a millionaire; only very, very talented writers become millionaires; and if other girls in the town can marry millionaires, I guess I can! But oh Harold, to think that you should be so unworthy! Do not attempt to explain, at least not till I have started for Honolulu, when you may write, if you choose. But oh Harold, you have turned the wine of life to vinegar; I have seen the feet of clay, and my heart is a dead thing.

CAROLINE.

Harold gasped! Then he translated to himself:

"She wanted to go to Honolulu, and she worked it by getting engaged to me, and telling her father, knowing he'd pack her off to separate us! And then they talk of the devotion of women! I'll never believe in one of them again—except, of course, Martha."

He allowed himself a few more minutes of angry contemplation of Caro-

line's disloyalty. Then he spent a little time softly remembering her pretty ways. Finally he dismissed her, with a throb of pity for her despair when she should come back and find him engaged to Martha. Then he tore up her letter and opened Flossie's. This began: "Dear Leg o' Lamb—" And Harold started indignantly that she should dare use to him that despised nickname. It went on:

I've been so busy since poor dear Bud got back from his grandfather's funeral that I've not had a minute to write you. This is only a line to say that I hope you're enjoying your vacation, and to ask when you're coming back. We're awfully anxious to see you. Because we've always been such close friends, I want you to know first of my happiness. Bud and I are engaged, and are to be married as soon as I can get my trousseau ready. He has given up his work here (I suppose you have heard that his grandfather left him a million?), and we're going to live in New York, or in some real place. Royal is too amusing, with its provincial society, and its young men trying to ape the manners of society leaders and of great writers and all that. By the way, we trust you won't give up *your* writing; it shows so much promise. Bud hopes, with his money, to help a lot of struggling writers and artists and all that. Bud thinks one reason for money is to patronize the fine arts.

Always your sincere friend,

FLOSSIE.

That letter Harold ground under his heel. Jilted, by Jove! jilted by two girls! And for Flossie Harlowe to try to patronize him, when a month ago she wanted to eat out of his hand! All right! Thank heaven he was delivered from a girl who showed the atrocious taste she did. Struggling writers! provincial society of Royal! young men aping! Harold could only open and shut his mouth helplessly, wishing for stronger words than any the language afforded.

BUT presently, having torn Flossie's letter into little pieces and scattered it on top of Caroline's, Harold grew calmer. Millionaire or not, Bud couldn't hold his own with one Harold Lambert, renowned writer of feature-plays. He had beaten Bud when he was down and Bud up; he could beat him

still, now that they were more nearly on an equality—more especially if Flossie married him, thereby destroying his desirability in the eyes of girls. Nothing to fear from Rosebud Henderson; nothing to fear from heartless Flossie; nothing to fear from faithless Caroline. Jilted—thank the Lord!

He went downstairs, and met Martha in the hall. He drew her into the living-room, and whispered ardently:

"You're really engaged now, dearest. It's all right."

"Oh, tell me," cried Martha; "how did you handle them?"

"Dear, I'd rather not go into details," said Harold gently. "Isn't it enough to know that I did handle them?"

"You're so wonderful, Harold," she

cried blissfully. "Were—were they dreadfully hurt?"

"Every heart knoweth its own sorrow," quoted Harold softly.

No need to tell painful details to this confiding little soul. He wasn't wonderful, of course, at least, not so very wonderful, but let the dear child think so! It did not occur to Harold that the dear child's head was fairly level. But whatever suspicions she had, all she really cared about was that he should be free.

"And there never, never will be anyone else?" asked Martha.

And Harold, with a sigh, laid down his philandering.

"Never anyone," he said, "but you, beloved."



Mixing It With Feeney

A "Shoestring Charley" story.

By Courtney
Ryley Cooper

ILLUSTRATED BY R. M. BRINKERHOFF

NINE o'clock at night, on a circus lot, finds a wonderful difference from two hours earlier. Where the menagerie top had been at seven is only a great space of blankness, all the more blank for the lack of the spreading stretch of dun-colored canvas which had covered it two hours earlier. The towering poles are gone; the cages are lined in long

rows, awaiting the strings of "baggage stock" that are to follow the tortuous line of torch-markers to the runs, or loading place. Against a wall of canvas, the elephants are huddled in great, hulking shadows, squealing their discomfort and their desire for the bedding of the "bull cars" that will await them as soon as their act in the main tent is finished. The glaring gasoline lights

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have been moved from the smooth, iron-railed main entrance, to a mere flap in the big tent, where squawking ticket sellers mill their way through the crowd of hangers-on, yelping of the wonders of the concert-t-t-t or aftah-show-w-w-w, a dime, ten cents, and a reserved seat for everaybodie-e-e-e-e!

And to a circus man there is something gripping, something fascinating, about nine o'clock at night, when the heavy, truckling wagons are making their pull-out from the lot, when the torches glare at the street corners to guide the tired "skinners" or teamsters to the runs, when even the music of the big show band, describing as it does the variance of the program, becomes a great, musical clock to click away the minutes so that they may be known and heard by even the merest "razorback" and the lowest laborer. As for Shoestring Charley, of the World Famous, it had always been his favorite time of the day. There was something romantic about it all which went to the heart of the wiry little showman; something about the billowing of the canvas as it fluttered to earth, something about the darkness and the lights which held him always, which ever brought him out of the big tent just as soon as the entry was made, that he might watch the operation of "pulling down."

And thus it was that as Prince Wahoo of the sideshow came forth for his night ballyhoo, as the spielers croaked forth their messages of the wonders within, Shoestring Charley wandered about in front of the stand and mingled with the "towners" as they listened to the speech of the raucous-voiced one beneath the flaring torches. He rolled a cigarette slowly, and perked his head to listen to the story of the capture of the Prince, in the wilds of Abyssinia; then reflected mentally that he soon must be changing wild men. The show was approaching Chicago, and some of the present Prince's lower State Street friends might recognize him in spite of the make-up.

Shoestring squinted his eyes a bit and gazed approvingly at a negro canvasman as he hurried by. The matter of the new wild man was settled. He edged

closer to the ballyhoo stand and struck a match. Then he inhaled deeply and blew the smoke high into the air. Shoestring was satisfied with life; happy with the satisfaction that paying business and a good tab from the ticket wagon can bring. Again he puffed deeply, he drew closer—then swerved with the rapidity of an animal.

From far in the darkness had come a scream, the scream of a man in agony. The cigarette was thrown aside; with one great plunge Shoestring had leaped past the ballyhoo stand, dodged under the gaudy banners of the sideshow and was running into the darkness. The great shadow of a circus wagon blurred before him. Then the shadows of horses—then of men as they hurried from every direction in the darkness. The scream came again—and again. Then voices:

"Can't help if it does hurt—we've got to get that wheel off him. Pull 'em up, Bill!"

A shout, the cracking of a whip as Shoestring plunged forward. Again the cry, more horrible, more racking. A moan followed, then silence. Another bound and Shoestring was by the wagon, to scratch a match on its side and reflect the flickering flame in the face of Hazy Long, boss canvasman.

"Fuzz Jordan," that person explained. "Wagon knocked him down. Foot smashed pretty bad." He turned. "Hey you—swing ahoid there. Get him to the dressing top. The doc's around there. Lay-y-y to it!"

A low, half whimpering moan as the workmen lifted the injured one and carried him away. Shoestring's eyes half closed.

"What was the matter with him? Crazy? Couldn't he see the wagon?"

"Drunk," came the answer of Hazy.

"What about the guy what's drivin'?" Shoestring was snapping his questions as he pawed for his makin's. "Aint he got no eyes? What's his voice for? What's he think he's runnin', a Juggernaut? I'm getting sick o'—"

"Same answer," broke in the voice of Hazy. "Drunk. Half the bunch's been soused to-night. Say, this show'll be lucky if she gets outa town—"

But Shoestring had cut in.

"Feeney's joint?" he snapped, and his shoulders hunched a bit. He struck a match and absently allowed it to flare unused in his fingers as he waited for his answer. "Come clean now, Haze, and stop protectin' that guy. You aint got no alibi anyhow; this here's a dry town. It was Feeney's joint, wasn't it?"

"Yeh, it was," Hazy answered finally. Shoestring scratched another match viciously.

"Thought so. Hunt him up and tell him. I want him. I'll be by the ballyhoo stand in front o' the kid-show and I don't want him stalling any on the way. Tell him to start hunting me before his ankles swell. Get me? Now beat it."

And then, his cigarette glowing against the darkness, his hands deep in his pockets, his wiry little shoulders hunched far forward, Shoestring Charley made his way back to the ballyhoo stand to await the coming of Feeney the Fox, legal adjuster of the World Famous. Five minutes more and he looked up into the face of a tall, heavy shouldered man, whose eyes shifted in caverns beneath his shaggy brows, eyes which belied the grin on his lips. The Fox tried joviality.

"Haze said you was sore about something, Shoestring," he began. "I aint done nothin', have I?"

"Huh?" Shoestring puffed at the butt of his cigarette and perked his head. "Done nothin'? No, you aint done a

thing. Aint felt your back lately, have you?" he queried quickly.

"Felt my back? No. Why?" Feeney's hands went behind him.

"Nothin', only I didn't know but what you was sproutin' wings. Looky here, Feeney, how long you been fixin' for me?"

"Two months. What's the idea, Charley?"

"And you've been drawing a weekly insult o' seventy-five dollars all that time, aint you?"

"Why sure."

"For runnin' around and letting city officials take license money from you. And that aint enough. You gotta lie to me and tell me you'd cut out that boot-leggin' joint you tried to pull the first week you was on the show. Now don't deny it!" A barking sharpness came into Shoestring's voice and he edged closer. The grin left Feeney's lips.

"Who's been spillin' that stuff?"

"It's spilled and that's enough. Now, lemme tell you something, Foxy ol' kid. I'm deciding to economize, and the first guy I'm cutting off

the pay-roll's yourself. Waltz over to the wagon and get your money. Then let's see just how quick you can sprint off this lot. I want you missin' from the show in the morning. Understand?"

The low-sunk eyes beneath the shaggy brows took on a queer, threatening glare.

"Firin' me, huh?"





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Shoestring Charley grinned maliciously.

"Oh, no, kid, you're wrong," he answered. "I aint firin' you. I'm just telling you your pay's stopped, and that unless you beat it off this lot awful quick you'll wake up in a room where there's a lot o' white cots and ask the doctor what hit you. Now beat it!"

"Firin' me, huh?" The eyes of Feeney the Fox grew vicious. "All right, ol' kid, but listen—"

"I aint going to listen to nothing."

The "fixer" smiled.

"All right. But you aint done yet, see? I didn't live in Hamilton eight years for nothin'. And I didn't hold office in Fairburn for nothin' either. And I don't know nobody in Rocksville—oh no, I don't. Fire me, huh?" And he bent over the wiry little man before him. "Fire me, huh? All right—wait!"

He whirled and hurried into the darkness.

A QUEER little smile came to the lips of Shoestring, as he turned and stumbled through the half darkness to the flaring lights of the big top.

"Wait—huh?" he asked himself. "Oh yes, I'll just wear myself out waitin'.—Where's Warren?" he snapped as he reached the entrance. "Send him out here!"

A ticket-taker dodged under the canvas. Shoestring wandered a few feet into the darkness, then turned at the voice beside him.

"Want me?"

"Bad," came the answer of the showman. "We show Hamilton next Monday, don't we?"

"Yeh."

"And Fairburn next day and Rocksville the next. That right?"

"Yeh. What's the racket?"

"Nothin', only you've gotta aviate over to the ticket wagon, grab a roll o' ten spots and a pocketful o' tickets and jump ahead. Them towns is liable to bring trouble. I've fired Feeney."

"Gosh!" The exclamation of Slats Warren, general agent, was mouth-filling. "Say, I gotta fix them towns and fix 'em quick if that guy's sore. He stands strong around here."

"Strong?" Shoestring Charley grinned. "Just stronger'n the mayor's socks, that's all. Now rush things. Grab the first rattler if you have to ride the rods. And wire me to-morrow."

Two minutes more and he watched Slats Warren scurry from the ticket wagon and toward the car-line that led to town. Then, his cigarette drooping from a corner of his mouth, his hat slanted on the back of his head, his eyes twinkling with appreciation, Shoestring Charley seated himself in an empty "reserved" and watched the aerial act of the Flying Starbers as though there had never been a trouble in the world. Sometimes men allow trouble to worry them in the circus business—but only sometimes. It would become too monotonous.

And the equanimity continued through the performance. It continued through the night, through the parade of next morning, through the performance of the afternoon. Then Shoestring, loafing at the front entrance, suddenly stopped whistling and reached for his ever-present aid in trouble, his makin's. A messenger boy was approaching. Shoestring signed the book with a queer little expression in his eyes, then rammed a finger under the flap of the envelope. Slowly he read the message:

Charles Grenolds,

Owner, World Famous Circus,
Sparkstown, Ill.

Look out for trouble. Feeney here this afternoon and framed city officials for something. Can't find out what. Wont talk to me. Feeney had long conference county veterinarian. Can't find out object. Have spilled tickets around liberally but it don't do any good. Feeney gone on to Fairburn. Will follow him there then double back here. Will wire if get any dope.

WARREN.

Shoestring read it all again. Then he turned to the messenger.

"No answer," he said finally. "Guess I'll have to take the Fox's tip, after all," he mused, as he read the message for the third time, "—wait."

THE end of that waiting came with a rap at the stateroom door in the dullness of dawn, three days later. Shoe-

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TOWN, while the bearded veterinary opened his first car and went to work. Eight o'clock, and there clanked to the runs an assemblage of everything from plow nags to livery ponies. Ten o'clock, and not more than half the wagons had left the flat cars. Noon. One o'clock. Two. Three, and the parade, its great wagons lagging behind conglomerate masses of horseflesh, was dragged to the peevish, waiting crowds of the street. Four o'clock, and the parade had not returned to the showgrounds. Five, and it straggled in to find half the business of the afternoon gone and Shoestring Charley surrounded by cigarette stumps. Night came, and the townspeople straggled in by threes and fours, while the razorbacks hurried out to the wagons with the needless seats, and Shoestring Charley gazed at the row of figures in the ticket wagon, which told him that the loss for Hamilton had gone into four figures. The smoke of his cigarettes hung heavy about him. Feeney was at work, at work mysteriously, at work where Warren could not learn his tricks—and there remained two towns to fight.

Midnight, and there dropped from a Pullman the State veterinarian and

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"Jest what we was a-goin' t' do," came from the man with the beard. "We aint a-causin' nobody no trouble, but—"

"No, you aint causin' no trouble!" snarled Shoestring. "You've just gummed up the cards so they wouldn't shuffle for the Queen o' Sheba, that's all. Now, looky here, this train's goin' into town, hear me? And this show's goin' on the lot if they aint a horse comes out o' them cars. Hudson, dive into town and hire all the nags you can. Then beat it for Springfield and grab hold o' the State veterinary. This is Feeny's stuff. He'll pull it to-morrow too—and I want to be settin' up for him. Get that vet' out here and have every horse certified to. Now find that engineer and let's pull our freight. Come on in, Harry Chinn, and examine them horses. Examine yourself sick on 'em, and see if I care, you bunch o' highbinders!" he added under his breath.

TOWN, while the bearded veterinary opened his first car and went to work. Eight o'clock, and there clanked to the runs an assemblage of everything from plow nags to livery ponies. Ten o'clock, and not more than half the wagons had left the flat cars. Noon. One o'clock. Two. Three, and the parade, its great wagons lagging behind conglomerate masses of horseflesh, was dragged to the peevish, waiting crowds of the street. Four o'clock, and the parade had not returned to the showgrounds. Five, and it straggled in to find half the business of the afternoon gone and Shoestring Charley surrounded by cigarette stumps. Night came, and the townspeople straggled in by threes and fours, while the razorbacks hurried out to the wagons with the needless seats, and Shoestring Charley gazed at the row of figures in the ticket wagon, which told him that the loss for Hamilton had gone into four figures. The smoke of his cigarettes hung heavy about him. Feeny was at work, at work mysteriously, at work where Warren could not learn his tricks—and there remained two towns to fight.

Midnight, and there dropped from a Pullman the State veterinarian and

Hudson. Two hours more, while clumsy horses struggled against unaccustomed difficulties, while drivers swore and shouted, while bosses roared their orders and trainmen scowled at the delay—then the circus trains began their belated, grinding journey. The tired razorbacks sought their bunks. The canvasmen climbed to their self-appointed beds of straw beneath the wagons. The bosses stretched themselves for sleep—but there were three men who were just beginning their work, Shoestring, Hudson and the man he had brought from Springfield, the man whose verdict would be above all others. The door of a horse car swung open, to admit three men. An hour, and as the train stopped, the door opened again and three men hurried to the next car, once more to dive in, once more to begin their inspections. Dawn—sunrise, and the train swung in to its belated destination. Three men ran forth with tacks and hammers and pasteboards. The inspection was finished. Upon every car there flared the verdict of the night:

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Nor was it unnecessary. For again there appeared a sheriff. Again there appeared a county veterinary, to stare at the wording of the blanks, then to go away in silence. Shoestring watched them with narrowed eyes, eyes which longed for the calm of sleep. But sleeping was far away. Two

hours later, Shoestring Charley, taking the place of the man he had discharged, sought the city hall, to pay the usual circus license, only to find a special meeting of the council in session and the license raised five hundred per cent. Nor was it the end. Parades were dangerous. Horses might run away. The elephants might stampede. A lion might break its bars—and Fairburn suddenly had found it necessary to charge a parade license of two hundred dollars, payable in advance. Shoestring Charley argued, then reached for his roll of money.



"Well, who are these birds? Aint tongue-tied, are you?" he snapped at the nearest stranger. "I'm sheriff," came the answer. "You aint a-goin' to pee-form here."



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"Gentlemen,"—his voice was smooth and calm as he peeled off the bills,— "there aint no town got nothin' on you. When the season's over and the good old boat's warped in, I'll come back and give you the show—providin' you don't take it away from me first. There's your seven hundred beans, and I hope you get smallpox from handlin' it, not wishin' you any harm!"

He ambled out of the courthouse, to find the townspeople waiting on the main streets and the parade wandering around somewhere in the outskirts of town, under the guidance and protection of an immovable chief of police. He ambled to the circus lot, to find the treasurer shaking his fist in the face of the lot owner, as that person argued for more money. Aimlessly Shoestring wandered on to the cookhouse, to find the steward roaring and wild-eyed.

"Sour milk!" came the almost yelping voice of that individual. "Rancid butter! Spoiled beef! Rotten eggs! Show me one o' them grocers out of this town and I'll brain him. I'll—"

"You'll O. K. the bill like a good little boy and forget it ever happened," answered Shoestring Charley smoothly. "Then when the gang comes in to dinner you'll feed 'em canned stuff and bull 'em into liking it. We aint among friends just now, kid."

And while the steward roared his indignation to the great stoves of the range wagon, Shoestring wandered on. He knew what the ticket wagon tab would be to-day—another thousand short, with an expense that ran half that much above the average. As for to-morrow—

But the to-morrow brought its surprise, a surprise that was as welcome as it was unusual. Never a knock came at the stateroom door at dawn, never an interruption as the long train pulled into town and sent its truckling wagons through the streets to the circus lot, never a hitch, never a trouble. Break-fast, and there showed the lank form of Slat's Warren as he slid into his chair beside Shoestring.

"Something happened," he announced. "Feeney blew the town. Never even came near it."

Shoestring Charley stopped in the midst of his ham and eggs and reached for a cigarette.

"Never came near it, huh?"

"No. He—"

"Want to know why?" Shoestring smiled the least bit. "I aint no mind-reader, but I could a-told you that an hour ago. Feeney's too busy. Say-y-y, that guy all a-sudden don't know we're on earth. Here's a little something that came in the morning mail. Read 'er out loud, the clipping and all. I want to get it all in my nut before I start framing."

He passed a letter which bore the World Famous mark on the envelope to his general agent, then leaned back in his chair, forgetful of his breakfast. His cigarette smoke went high in the air. His eyes were nearly closed, as Warren began the missive:

Dear Mr. Grenolds:

After having sent you the parade route for Marksbury, I found it necessary to change same in one street. This is Blue Avenue, which will have to be switched to Filmore Street because of the condemnation of the bridge on Blue. This was just condemned to-day, as you will see by the enclosed clipping.

Yours truly,

THOMAS WIDENER,
General Press Representative.

Slats Warren stared a bit.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Read the clipping," ordered the show owner, "and maybe you'll get some of the sand out of your gasoline. Read 'er out loud."

Warren, still puzzled, read:

Following orders from the city engineer's office, the steel bridge at Blue Avenue over the Magna River was to-day condemned as being unsafe for traffic. It is claimed by the city engineer's office that the swift current of the Magna has so undermined the supports as to cause the collapse of the bridge at almost any minute.

The condemnation of the bridge followed several investigations on the part of the city engineer's office and was finally decided upon after a special investigation by Mr. James Randolph Feeney, an expert bridge constructionist, who reached here several days ago and who spent most of yesterday afternoon at the—

"Get that stuff?" Shoestring was smiling at the ceiling. "Get that Feeney thing?"



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"Get it?" Slat's snarled. "No, I don't. That guy wouldn't know a bridge from a dog biscuit. What's the—"

"Go on," came the order of Shoestring, and Warren read on:

—bridge. According to Mr. Feeney's report to the city engineer's office, the slightest extra weight on the bridge would cause an immediate collapse. It is his opinion that it will be necessary to go at least fifty feet deep to bed rock in the building of a new bridge to make the supports safe.

This may lead to Marksburg having one of the most beautiful and substantial bridges in the state. Inasmuch as the Magna makes its bend at Blue Avenue, requiring only the one bridge in the town, it has been proposed by Aldermen Jansen, Moore and Brown to build in the new bridge a monument to the enterprise and importance of the town, combining magnificence and usefulness. It is proposed to convert the unused road bonds to this purpose, and if the ordinance is passed for the construction of the bridge, bids will be called for at once.

Only one snag lies in the pathway of those who purpose the new bridge, William R. Thomas, city attorney.

"I cannot see the feasibility of the plan at all," says Mr. Thomas. "I believe the bridge could be repaired, saving the people of this county thousands of dollars. It looks like a useless expenditure of money to me and I shall strongly oppose it."

However, the opposition of Mr. Thomas will count for little, inasmuch as Jansen, Moore and Brown form the strongholds of the council, controlling the votes of at least four other members, which make a majority. It is more than probable that less than two months will see work begun on a new structure.

Shoestring grinned this time.

"Now do you get it? The oldest game of all, Slat's, and Feeney hits town just in time to play the famous engineer and get in on it. Say, is it any wonder that guy let up on me, with a fake contract for that bunch of kale almost in his reach? Far be it from me to chase away from my good old show, but it'll have to run under your guidance for a few days. I'm going to hop a rattler for Marksburg!"

IN Marksburg the next afternoon. Shoestring Charley wandered about the hotels, the saloons, the poolrooms, ever in the background; then suddenly

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decided upon another part of town in which to wait for the show. Bending over a table, engrossed in his favorite game of "pay ball," Shoestring Charley had glimpsed Feeney the Fox, and the one glimpse was enough. Shoestring sidled down the street, rolling a cigarette against the wind as he went, and made inquiries for the Blue Avenue bridge.

A long walk—then he stopped, to look aimlessly at the warning sign of condemnation, finally to sidle under the barrier and out upon the bridge. No one was near. He swung over the railing, down upon the lower supports and finally to the piers. The years of the past came back to him—years when he had been a twenty-four-hour man, making the every preparation that is necessary for the coming of a circus, years when the examination of bridges had been the daily diet of his business life. Carefully he bent over and squinted along the line of the piers to the water. Then he rose, swung once more to the surface of the bridge, seized a stone from the approach, re-tracked to the girders and pounded against them. Carefully he bent his head and listened to the reverberation, while the cigarette which hung from his lips beamed with a steady glow. He shifted his eyes to the river below, then turned sharply and left the bridge. Ten minutes later he was in the current, rowing about beneath the bridge, a long cord rolled beneath his knees. He stopped at the center pier, fastened a lead to the cord, anchored himself with one hand and let out the plumb. Carefully he felt the action of the water against the cord—then he moved on to the next pier, and the next—and the next. At last he swung loose, raised his oars and drifted with the current back to the spot where he had rented the boat.

"It's a shoestring chance," he murmured as he swung to shore. Then he laughed softly. "Well," he added, "I'm Shoestring Charley. —Say, guy," he called to the boatman on the bank, "is there a telephone around here anywhere?"

The result of that telephone call was that two men rose from a table late that

night after a conference of hours. One was young and flushed with excitement. His hair was tousled, his eyes were brilliant with the glow of opportunity. The other was exceedingly calm—more calm than ordinarily as he rolled his cigarette, slid it along his lips to seal it, then twisted the end preparatory to the touch of the match.

"You get me on this stuff?" he questioned at last. "I aint playing no fool stunt. I'm just gambling, that's all. I'm risking my circus, and you're risking your reputation if you make a fizzle of things. D'you shake dice with me or not?"

"There's my hand, Mr. Grenolds!" came the answer of the younger man. Shoestring was too busy with his match and cigarette to accept it.

"All right, the little game goes," he answered between puffs. "Don't wonder what's become o' me to-morrow. I'm going back to the show. But I'll be on the job when the blow-off comes, and I'll be on strong. And incidentally, I got just twelve minutes to catch that train. S'long!"

And Shoestring Charley Grenolds whistled as he went out of the room, whistled as he leaped for a taxicab, and whistled under his breath as he rolled into his berth in the sleeper.

"Huh," he muttered to himself finally, "it'd be funny if I'd get fresh and lose my whole blamed show on this thing, wouldn't it? Yeh," he added, and his face went serious in the darkness, "it'd be just about as funny as a pair o' crutches!"

Saying which, Shoestring

Charley dismissed the subject and jammed his head into the pillow.

More, the subject was dismissed all the next day, as he wandered around the circus lot. It was dismissed that night as he sat under the marquee at the main entrance and watched the throngs as they piled into the menagerie tent. It was dismissed as he watched the operation of pulling down—then suddenly brought to life as Hudson, the manager, passed him on the way to the cars. Shoestring turned. He flicked his ever-present cigarette high into the air and watched its spark curve to the ground. Then:

"Hudson!"

"Yes sir!" The manager wheeled and returned. Shoestring squinted his eyes at the torches of the ballyhoo stand.

"I'll lead the parade to-morrow morning. And I want the formation switched. Bring the hippopotamus wagon up front and switch the elephants right in behind it. Then put those three tableaux to follow that. Do you get me?"

"Yes sir."

"Good. Hitch up the phaeton for me and put two men on it—your two heftiest razorbacks. Put 'em in livery uniform. That's all."

The answer of Hudson was as it should have been, and more than that, the next morning, when the flags reached their fluttering places atop the long poles, when the bugle called for parade, its formation was different from what it ever had been on the World Famous.

"Understand, Mr. Grenolds," explained Hudson as



Again there appeared a sheriff. Again there appeared a county veterinary, to stare at the wording of the blanks, then to go away in silence.

he stood by the phaeton with its husky footmen, "I'm not pretending to know it all, but this formation aint going to make the hit you think it will. It's top-heavy. All the heavy stuff's in front. It ought to be split up a bit, so that--"

Shoestring grinned the slightest bit. "It'll do," he answered. "Lemme a couple o' reg'lar cigarettes. Can't roll any with these here reins in my hands. Blow the whistle and let 'er start."

SHOESTRING leaned back in his phaeton and idly watched the crowds as the parade traveled on, block after block. He squinted far ahead. The streets were lined thick; the curbings were heavy with their collections of children; and down where the route made its turn, he could see the rounded crowds along the line of march. Shoestring whistled in unison with the calliope. Then he gathered his reins tighter in his hands and leaned forward. A block more. Two blocks. Three

—and then: "Get aside there, everybody!" It was Shoestring's voice that barked forth toward the crowds in front of the bridge

—the turn of the announced route. "Stand aside! Pete! Tom! Hear me?" He swung for just a second in his seat. "Jump out there and part that crowd! Then pull down those barriers. We're going to cross that bridge!"

"But Mr. Grenolds—"

"Get down there and do what I tell you!"

"But it aint the route!" One of the razorbacks had pulled a slip of paper from his pocket and was attempting to hold it where Shoestring could see. The lips of the little showman parted. His voice became sharper than ever.

"Who's running this show, me'r you? Part that crowd or I'll jar you loose from your ankles! Part that crowd and tear down that barrier! We're going through!"

From far down the street, Shoestring could see the crowds milling closer.

He snarled again at the two razorbacks. They leaped forward and with swinging arms sent the crowd in front of the bridge far to the sides. Two leaps more, and they were tearing at the barriers of the condemned bridge. Shoestring turned slightly to



He passed a letter which bore the World Famous mark on the envelope to his general agent, then leaned back in his chair, forgetful of his breakfast.

see the approaching form of a policeman. Hastily he motioned to a man in the crowd. A rush, and the man was at the side of the policeman, to whisper a few words—and the policeman turned his back. Shoestring hoisted one of his "tailor-mades" to his lips, then reached anxiously for a match.

"Well, he's got the chief of police working, anyhow," came from between his tightly closed lips. "Hey, you!" He rose and yelled at the razorbacks. "Rush that! This aint no holiday! Rip 'em off! . . . rip 'em off!"

The tearing, rending sound of breaking lumber. Shoestring jerked at his reins, then pulled them taut. It was Shorty Harris, the elephant man, shouting to him from beside the phaeton.

"Mr. Grenolds, it's a mistake. That there bridge's condemned. That aint the route. Besides, there aint an elephant on earth that'll cross a bridge that aint safe! It's—"

"That so?" Shoestring bit out his words and held the flaring match to his cigarette at the same time. "Well, we're going across just the same. And rush that guy with the hip' den close up behind me! Speed things, kid, speed 'em!"

He called to his horses, he reached for the whip; and they sped forward. Behind him there sounded the rumbling of the hippopotamus den; behind that the shouting of the "bull men" or elephant tenders, the squealing of the great mammals as the hooks shot home and urged them forward. Past the barriers went Shoestring Charley, the hoofs of his horses thudding on the floor of the bridge. A second more, and there came a greater sound, the heavy cludding of the hoofs of the eight-horse "hip' team," and the thundering noise of the great, weighty den as it rolled behind. The shouting sounded once more; again the squealing. Shoestring rose in his seat and looked backward. Mamma, head of the elephant herd, had placed one mammoth foot on the bridge to test it, then trotted forward, the rest of the herd following her. Quickly Shoestring glanced about him. As far as he could see were people, people, people, running from every direction, massing heavier

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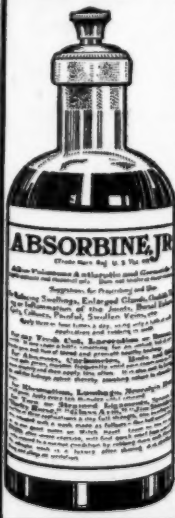
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and heavier in the spaces and streets about the bridge. He drove on, the razorbacks running beside the horses.

The center of the bridge. Still he drove. Three-quarters across—finally the end. He stopped his horses, leaped from the phaeton and threw the reins to the nearest razorback.

"Hold that team right where it is!" he ordered. Then throwing his half-smoked cigarette far into the river, he ran back toward the body of the parade. A shouted order, and the driver of the hippopotamus den swung his whip high above the backs of his horses. Another order, and Shorty was cramming his elephants closer and closer to the great den before him, taking up every possible available foot of room. Out in the crowd, Shoestring could see that men were passing here and there, hurrying from one person to another in the crowd, taking names—the names of witnesses.

He sped on. The first tableaux wagon. Another hoarse-shouted order, and it too was shot into position on the bridge, to stop, then wait while the driver of the second squeezed his horses and his wagon in beside it.

Shoestring sped on, jamming a cigarette between his lips as he ran. Around the corner had come the third tableaux wagon, and Shoestring waved at it wildly.

"Speed! Speed!" he shouted. "Get on that bridge! Make them horses show something!"

Again the cracking of whips and the heavy cludding of hoofs, the heavier rumbling of tons of wood and steel. A lion cage swung into sight and Shoestring sent it after the tableau wagons. An artillery cart—and it went after the rest. Horses, clowns, cages, bandwagons—one by one Shoestring Charley shouted and cursed and yelled and swung his arms—then sent them one by one, hurrying onto the condemned bridge to cram themselves behind the other wagons of the parade, the other horses, the other men and animals. Ten feet of space was left. Wildly Shoestring shot forward. More wildly than ever he swung his arms and there trotted past him the eight camels of the menagerie, to stand wide-eyed and cud-chewing, while the crowd

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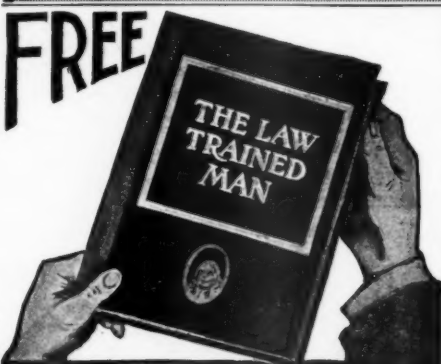
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pressed closer and the men with their little slips of paper rushed here and there, still gathering name after name. Shoestring reached nervously for a match. It flared, then dropped in the dust, and Shoestring leaped far to one side. A motor-car, with a policeman on each fender, was making its slow way through the packed throngs.

"All right!" came a voice. "Let 'em go!"

"All right!" echoed Shoestring, as he cupped his hands to his lips. "Start that parade! Hudson! Hudson-n-n-n!"

"Yes sir!"

"Run up ahead to that phaeton and lead the parade the rest of the way. I'm through. —Get 'em?" he asked, as he turned to the young man in the automobile.

"Every one of 'em," came the smiling answer of the city attorney. "We rounded 'em up the minute we got the signal the parade had started. Got 'em booked for investigation, the aldermen, Feeney, the city engineer and all. We're going to meet the chief now. We were just waiting for you to join in on the sweating," he shouted above the screeching of the calliope. "You're coming, aren't you?"

Shoestring Charley grinned. He plunged through the crowd.

"Does a fish swim?" he shouted in answer.

IT was late that afternoon that Shoestring Charley, of the World Famous, sat beneath the marquee at the entrance of the main show, reading the afternoon paper. At the ticket box, Slim Henkel, chief ticket taker, still was counting the bits of pasteboards that told of a packed tent within. Hudson was figuring.

"She'll go six thousand dollars on the day, if we get even half a house to-night," he said at last. Shoestring looked up from the newspaper he had been reading.

"Uh-huh," he answered. "Swell picture o' me they got in this afternoon's paper, aint it? You oughta seen Feeney cough up! Honest, kid, it was funny. But f'r that matter, all o' 'em stepped on each other's feet confessing. Couldn't help it; the goods was on 'em too strong, after that parade thing. Can you beat that bunch? They was goin' to put up a tin bridge and charge a half million for it! They're all goin' over—up to and includin' the Honorable Feeney the Fox."

Hudson smiled.

"Gettin' to be the real little muck-raker, aint you?" he laughed. "Some revenge!"

Shoestring Charley slowly winked an eye and reached for his makin's.

"Revenge?" he asked. "Oh, no, kid, you're wrong. Just givin' the press agent a little lesson in publicity, that was all, an' wipin' out an undesirable gent at the same time. I got the circus on the first page, didn't I? And you just got through sayin' we was goin' to have a six-thousand-dollar day, didn't you? And what's more,"—Shoestring once more slowly winked his eye,— "this here publicity aint going to be worth nothing throughout the rest o' the State. Oh, no! Only about fifty thousand beans, that's all!"

There was silence. Once more he turned to his paper.

"That sure is one swell picture o' me," he added after long reflection. "Only I wish'd it'd been a front one instead o' a profile. My ears is too big, aint they?"

"WARPIN' IN," the best of all the Shoestring Charley stories, will be in the next—the May—issue, on the news-stands April 22nd.

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

A NOVEL BY MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Continued from page 1204 of this issue.

"Of course while these things are pending we shall arrange for your maintenance, on the old basis, in this house. No one can pretend that Mr. Farley didn't have every intention of providing for you generously. It's only fair to tell you this: that even when he seemed to waver at times, he never cut your legacy below a hundred thousand dollars; and I know he regretted the comparative meagerness of that—tripled the amount in the very next will he made! You need have no fears, Miss Farley," he went on reassuringly. "But you are entitled to your own counsel; it's only right that I should say this to you immediately; and I suggest that you ask Mr. Eaton to represent you. I hope you will confer with him at once."

HE bowed with old-fashioned formality. He was more troubled than he cared to have Nan know, and her silence disconcerted him. But her face expressed neither disappointment nor alarm. She stood erect by the table, an intent look in her eyes. Not wishing to leave her weighed down by the uncertainties of her future he said briskly:

"You mustn't bother yourself about these matters, Miss Farley. In the end you will find yourself a rich woman. So—"

He waved his hand as the preliminary to a quick exit, but she called him back. He did not like being called back; now, he thought, there would be the tears he had dreaded.

"You don't understand," she said quietly. "I ought to have made it clear in the first place, but I didn't know just how—or when—to say it. I can't—I will not take any of Mr. Farley's money—not even if the law should give it to me."

He looked at her with the mute appeal of the deaf when they fail to catch a meaning.

"Really, Miss Farley—"

"I won't take one cent of Mr. Farley's money," Nan repeated firmly.

"I can't blame you for being disappointed—for resenting what may appear to be a lack of consideration on his part for your comfort—"

"Oh, it isn't that! I wouldn't have you think *that*! I'm sure he meant to do what was right—what was generous! You don't know how glad I am that our last day together was a happy one—we had never been on better terms. It's not that I have any unkind feeling toward Papa; it's all myself. The Farleys were only too kind to me. I went my own way and it made me selfish—and pretty hard, too, I'm afraid. Papa knew it; and you know yourself how little he trusted me. And he was right about me: I didn't deserve his confidence. But I'm going to begin all over again, as I couldn't if I began fighting for this money. I can see now that money can't make me happy. I'm going to work; I'm going to stop living, as I always have, just for myself. I'm going—I'm going to think about the rest of the folks a lot!"

"The folks?" repeated Thurston feebly. "What folks?"

"Oh, everybody! The down-and-outers—girls like me who get a bad start or make mistakes!"

Thurston's brows worked convulsively. He had been prepared for anything but this.

"Do I—do I understand you to mean that even if this estate could be turned over to you to-morrow you'd decline to receive it? It can't be possible—"

"Yes, that's what I mean!" she cried eagerly. "I've thought it all out, and have made up my mind about it. I don't want to be considered in anything that has to do with Papa's property."

"But, my dear child, you can't—you can't abandon your claims in any such

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fashion! It's my duty—I owe it to my friend and client to see that his wishes are fulfilled. Why—"

"Well," she persisted, "between all those wills you can't tell what he wanted—only that I was a great problem to him. I caused him a great deal of unnecessary worry and heartache. I hope this isn't going to cause you any trouble—" And she smiled in spite of herself at his consternation, as indicated by the twitching of his brows. And there *was* something absurd in this cool apology to a hard-headed lawyer for repudiating a claim whose validity he was in duty bound to support. The situation was too much for him; he must escape as quickly as possible from this young woman who brushed away a fairly tangible fortune as a waiter clears away bread-crumbs.

"Really, Miss Farley—" he began, but, thinking of nothing further to say, he backed awkwardly into the hall.

She helped him into his coat and opened the street door. He hurried off without saying good-by, clasp Timothy Farley's wills under his arm.

A light snow was falling; Nan stood on the steps and lifted her hot face to the fluttering flakes. She saw Thurston disappear toward his own house in the next block and then went to the telephone.

In a moment she was connected with Mrs. Copeland at the farm.

"I want a job," she was saying in a cheerful tone; "yes, that's it—a chance to work. You told me the other day you needed some one to look after your business at the market house. I'm applying for the job. Oh no! I'm not fooling; I want that place! Well, I want to see you, too; I'll be out early in the morning!"

CHAPTER XXIII

IN TRUST

"COPELAND FARM PRODUCTS" in plain blue letters against a white background swung over Nan's head on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings in the city market house. On those days she

left Mrs. Copeland's farm at five o'clock with the day's offerings, and by six the stand was in order.

An endless, jostling throng surged by, and every sale she effected, every negotiation for the future delivery of an order, had all the joy of an adventure. Her immediate neighbors were a big-fisted German gardener and a black-eyed Italian girl who sold fruits and vegetables. When business lagged, the German chaffed her about her wares or condoled with her when some frugal marketer priced her butter, sniffed and departed. Nan commanded a meager knowledge of Italian and flung a phrase at her dark-eyed neighbor now and then in the spirit of comradeship which the place encouraged. She liked her "job." She assured herself that she had never had so much fun in all her life, and that never again would she eat the bread of idleness.

But it had not proved to be so easy as she had imagined to slip out of her old life into the new. If she had left the Farley house preceded by a brass band and had marched round the monument and the length of Washington Street, her flight could hardly have attracted more attention.

The town buzzed. The newspapers neglected no phase of Nan's affairs, nor did they overlook her behind the counter dispensing "Copeland Farm Products." She was surprised and vexed by her sudden notoriety. A newspaper photographer snapped her, in her white sweater and blue-and-white tam o'shanter, passing eggs over the counter. The portrait appeared across three columns under the caption "Miss Nancy Farley in a New Rôle," supplemented by text adorned with such headlines as "Renounces her Fortune" and "Throws Away a Million Dollars." To be thus heralded was preposterous; she had merely gone to work for reasons that were, in any view of the matter, her own private affair. But public sentiment was astonishingly friendly; even those who had looked askance at her high flights with the Kinney crowd said it was an outrage that Farley had failed to provide for her decently. The whole town seemed to be sympathizing with her.

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FANNY, thinking at first it was only a joke, a flare of temperament—references to her temperament had begun to pall upon Nan!—had welcomed Nan to her house and given her charge of the market stand; but it was not without difficulty that she persuaded the girl to occupy her guest-room and share her meals.

"You'd better scold me when I make mistakes, for if I find I don't suit I'll fire myself," Nan declared. "And if I have to leave you I'll go to clerking in a department store. I just mention this so you won't be too polite. This isn't any grandstand play, you see; I mean business!"

It was certain, at any rate, that Copeland farm products were sold with amazing ease. As word got about that Nan Farley had become Mrs. Copeland's representative "on market," there was lively competition to procure those same wares. Fanny complained ruefully that the jellies, jams and pickles created by the young women in her industrial house would be exhausted before Christmas and that nothing would remain to sell but butter and eggs. Nan suggested orange marmalade and a cake-baking department to keep the girls at work during the winter, and on the off days she set herself to planning the preparation of these "specialties." Mrs. Farley's cooking lessons had not gone for naught; Nan could bake a cake in which there was no trace of "sadness," and after some experiments with jumbles and sand-tarts she sold her first output in an hour and started a waiting list.

Mrs. Copeland met Eaton at the end of the second week that she had never known the real Nan till now. There was no questioning her sincerity; she had cut loose from her old life, relinquished all hope of participating in Farley's fortune, and addressed herself zealously to the business of supporting herself. She became immediately the idol of the half-dozen young women in the old farmhouse, who thought her an immensely "romantic" figure and marveled at her industry and resourcefulness.

"Splendid! Give her all the room she wants," Eaton urged Mrs. Copeland.

"She's only finding herself; we'll have the Nan she was meant to be, the first thing we know."

"I didn't know all these nice church-going people would come to condole with me, or I'd have left town," she confided to Fanny. "These women who wouldn't let their daughters associate with me a year ago can't buy enough eggs now to show how much they sympathize with me. If they don't keep away I'm going to raise the price of their eggs, and that will break their hearts—and the eggs! But do you know," she went on gravely, "I've never been so happy in my life as I am now! And I wouldn't have anybody think it was out of pique, or with any unkind feeling toward Papa,"—tears shone in her eyes as the word slipped from her unconsciously,—“but I tell you nobody could make a nice, polite girl out of me. I was bound to get into scrapes as long as I hadn't anything really to do but fill in time between manicuring and hair-washing dates. There's a whole lot in that old saying about making a silk purse out of a sow's ear: it can't be done!”

"If you talk that way," Fanny laughed, "I shall send you home. I don't want you to think I approve of what you're doing. I'm letting you do it because I'm scared not to!"

"You'd better be—for if you hadn't taken me in I should have gone on the stage—honestly I should—in vaudeville, most likely, doing monologues right between the jugglers and the trained seals."

ON Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays Mr. Jeremiah A. Amidon found it convenient to visit the market house as early as seven-thirty (in spite of pressing duties at the store) to make sure, he said, that Nan and the farm-hand who drove her in and helped arrange the stock had got safely by all the railroad crossings on the way to town. He bestowed upon Nan on these occasions a single rose from a florist's booth. Nan wore his rose pinned to her sweater. There was something very nice about Jerry; he was so unobtrusively thoughtful and helpful. And he was almost as

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keen in his way as Eaton was in his.
"Little girl, if your eggs are guaranteed under the Pure Food Act, I'll take one—the large size."

"You'll find the hard-boiled eggs at the lunch counter in the next aisle, little boy," Nan answered. "How's John Cecil?"

"Working himself to death. You've driven him to it!"

"So you two are abusing me, are you?"

"No; not vocally. Cecil's shut up in his office every night, getting ready to clean up those cousins of Farley's down on the river, but he doesn't say anything. Look here, Nan, we've got a line of cold cream and other toilet marvels—stuff you could handle here as a side line. Let us send you up a bunch to put next to that pink jelly. It's high grade and we'll make it to you at the right price."

"Not on your life, Jerry. Drugs and hand-made country butter can't associate. You'd better run down to your own little shop now and go to work."

He was likely to reappear at lunch time, to see her for a moment before she left for the farm; and he assisted in balancing her cash when she confessed that it wouldn't "gee." His pride in her was enormous; he was satisfied that there was no girl to compare with her.

And Nan liked his admiration. It was so obviously genuine and supported by so deep an awe and reverence that no girl could have helped liking it! And Jerry was unfailingly amusing; his airs and graces, his attempts to wear a little learning lightly, were wholly transparent and invited the chaff he welcomed. Her feeling, dating from the beginning of their acquaintance, that their common origin in the back streets of Belleville established a tie between them had grown steadily. In all her late perplexities and self-questioning she had found herself wondering constantly what Jerry would say. He had from the first confided his ambitions to her, and they were worthy ones. He not only meant to get on, but he meant to overcome as far as possible his lack of early advantages. He steadfastly spent an hour every night at his Latin, with only an occasional lift from the busy Eaton. "As long as I've tackled it I might as well keep it up,"

he remarked apologetically. "Cecil says my English is so bad I'd better learn a few foreign languages to make me respectable!"

ONE noon Nan was munching an apple while waiting for Mrs. Copeland's man to carry out the empty crates and boxes, when Jerry appeared, looking unusually solemn.

"What's wrong with the world? You're not out of work, are you?" she demanded.

"I hoped you'd ask me," he replied with mock dejection. "The boss has been making a few changes at the store and I've got a new job."

"Better or worse?" she asked with feigned carelessness.

This was the first time he had referred to Copeland since her removal to the farm. There were still vast areas of ignorance and uncertainty in his mind as to her feeling toward Copeland.

"Better for me; I don't know about the house," he answered. "Hasn't anybody told you everything that's happened down our way?" He seated himself on the counter and clasped one knee with his gloved hands. "Well, we've reorganized; just about everything's changed except the sign. Boss steady as a rock on the quarter deck; things rather coming his way now. You heard about Kinney Cement? There was never any doubt about Cecil winning the patent cases; and now the boss has sold out his interest—quit cement for good and all—concentrating on drugs. I guess he got a good price for his cement stock, too."

He waited to see how she was affected by these reports.

"The drug business was in a bad way, wasn't it?" she asked carelessly.

"Um, well, it did look for a few minutes as though we mightn't pull through."

She laughed at his lightly emphasized "we."

"What are you doing now?—counting money or running the elevator?"

"Tease me some more! Say, Nan, I'm not kidding you. The boss made a new job for me; I'm sales manager—going to start out with a suit-case next week and shake hands with all our customers,

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"A gleam or two. So the boss got out of his scrape, did he? Well, I'm glad to hear it. He's too good a fellow to go to the bad."

This was spoken carelessly, but with a note of sincerity. Her world had turned upside-down since her last meeting with Billy. She waited for Jerry to enlighten her further.

"He's all right now; you can bet on that; he's not going to fool with his luck any more. Kind o' funny," —he was finding it difficult to conceal his embarrassment in speaking of Copeland to Nan,—"but the boss and Cecil are getting chummy. When the pinch came Cecil was right there; just kind o' strolled in and saved him after the black cap had been pulled on and tied under his chin. This is on the dead—I don't know anything—not a thing, you understand."

Nan nodded. She did not understand him very clearly, but she refused to ask questions.

"The boss and Cecil are lunching together every day now. Cecil stops for him and they spend an hour together. That kind o' tickles me," he ended softly. "I always wished they'd hit it off together."

He glanced at her for her approval of this new combination, which was hardly more surprising than his own manifestation of feeling. He evidently derived the deepest satisfaction from the new intimacy between Eaton and Copeland. The fleeting tenderness and wistfulness in his candid, humorous eyes touched her.

"Well!" he exclaimed cheerily, as the driver announced that the wagon was ready, "do you fly back to the farm, or will you join me in refreshments at a one-arm sandwichorium? I've only got twenty minutes."

"I'll fool you by accepting," she laughed. "I have some errands to do and shall just about catch the three o'clock interurban."

THEY walked to a lunch-room, where he found seats and brought her the sandwich and coffee she insisted was all she wanted. He observed her narrowly for signs of discontentment, but she had never seemed happier. He understood perfectly that she wished her new activities to be taken as a matter of course, and as long as she continued to countenance him he was satisfied.

He introduced her to a bank clerk who paused in his hurried exit to speak to him and incidentally to have a closer look at Nan. A girl nodded to him across the room; he explained that she was one of the smartest girls in town, "the whole show" in an insurance office; the members of the firm couldn't turn round unless she said so.

"Just think," Nan said, when she had eaten a piece of apple pie which he persuaded her to add to the sandwich, "I might have died without knowing how it feels to be a poor working girl."

"Well, don't die now that you've found it out! It would be mighty lonesome on earth without you. Have a chocolate eclaire?" he added hastily, "—business girl's special."

"No, thanks. If I don't turn up tonight with an appetite for dinner Mrs. Copeland will be scared and send for the doctor."

"By the way, I wish you'd casually mention me to that gifted lady; I'd like to hop off at Stop 3 some evening without being consumed by the dog. How about it?"

"Oh, she'll stand for it! She'll stand for 'most anybody who shows up with a clean face and a kind heart. She's an angel, Jerry. She's the finest woman that ever lived!"

"I'd sort o' figured that out for myself, just passing her on the boulevards. I thought I'd try for a rise out of Cecil the other night and just mentioned her with a gentle O. K. I'd gone up to his office to see if I could shine his shoes or do any little thing like that for him, and he looked at me so long I nearly had nervous prostration, and then he said: 'My dear boy, the poverty of your vocabulary is a constant grief to me!'—just like that. I guess he likes her, all right."

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"She has a good many admirers," Nan replied noncommittally as she crumpled her paper napkin. "She can't help it."

"Well, anything Cecil wants in this world he ought to have," Jerry remarked questioningly.

"Well, I hope he—I should hate to think he couldn't get anything he wanted in this world," said Nan.

Jerry was troubled at times by the fear that his adored Cecil might be interested in Nan, and the smile that accompanied her last remark was the least bit ambiguous. Still, it was not for him to question the ordinances of Heaven. If Cecil and Nan....

Nan began drawing on her gloves. When they reached the street she explained that she was going to the Farley house to gather up some of her traps that she had left behind. She lightened his burdened spirit by asking him to come out soon, and boarded a street-car.

THIS was her first visit "home" since she left the house to go to Fanny Copeland's. In her hurried flight she had taken only a trunk and a suit-case, but her summer gowns and a number of odds and ends remained to be packed and moved.

The colored maid, who had only vaguely grasped the meaning of Nan's sudden departure, admitted her with joyous exclamations.

"About time yo's comin' back, Miss Nan. Mr. Thu'ston came up heah and tole me and Joshua to stay right along. I thought you'd be comin' back. I guess Mistah Farley's been turnin' ovah in his grave 'bout yo' runnin' away. He was mighty ca'less not to fix his will the way it ought t' been. Yo'll find yo' room just the way yo' left it. Mistah Thu'ston said fo' me to keep things shined up just the way they always was."

Nan explained that she had merely come to pack her remaining things and asked Joshua to bring up a trunk from the cellar. She filled the trunk and added to the summer frocks articles from her desk and other memorabilia that she wished to keep for their various associations.

When she had finished she crossed the

hall to Farley's room, rather from force of habit than by intention. She ran her hand across the shelves that represented his steadfast literary preferences, which had never been altered in her recollection: "Pickwick;" Artemis Ward; a volume of Petroleum V. Nasby's writings; Franklin's Autobiography; Grant's Memoirs; Mark Twain, in well-worn original first editions, including the bulky "Innocents Abroad" and "Roughing It." She resolved to take "Life on the Mississippi," from which she had so often read to him in his last year. She rummaged in the closet for an album containing crude old-fashioned likenesses of Mr. and Mrs. Farley and a series of photographs of herself that marked the swift-moving years from the time she became a member of their household.

In a last slow survey of the room her eyes fell upon the portrait of Mrs. Farley that had arrested her with its kind motherly glance on the night of her temptation. She reflected that her right to remove anything from the house was questionable, but she meant to ask Thurston to give her the portrait when the house was finally disposed of.

As she lifted the frame and shook the wire loose from the hook, a paper that had been thrust behind the picture slipped over the mantel-edge with a soft rustling and fell at her feet. She laid the portrait on the bed and picked it up.

A glance sufficed to tell her that she had found another of Farley's wills—possibly the last, for which Thurston had inquired so particularly.

She opened it hurriedly and glanced at the last sheet. The spaces for the signatures of testator and witnesses were blank. It was only a worthless piece of paper, of no value to anyone. It seemed a plausible assumption that Farley, having decided finally that he would have no use for the earlier wills, had begun to destroy them after first placing the last one behind the picture to avoid the chance of confusing it with the others.

As Nan folded it a name caught her eye and she began to read.

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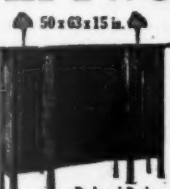
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The room swayed as the meaning of this proviso sank into her whirling senses. Farley had interposed Fanny between her and Billy—Fanny, Billy's former wife! The old man's hatred of Copeland, and his warm admiration for Fanny, had thus combined to fashion a device that was almost malevolent in its cunning. She followed Farley's reasoning clearly. He had assumed that his own feeling toward Copeland was shared by Fanny, and that she would never consent to a marriage which, in the vague prospect, had given him so much concern. He had presumably promoted the friendly relations between Fanny and her with this end in view.

As the first shock of the revelation passed, Nan laughed bitterly.

"Poor Papa!" she murmured.

He little knew how near she had come to marrying Billy! She gasped as it occurred to her that Farley might have discussed the matter with Fanny and persuaded her to accept the trust; but she quickly decided against this. It was unlikely that Farley had ever spoken to her about it; and it was inconceivable

that Fanny would have consented, when the purpose was so clearly to make use of her, as Billy's divorced wife, to stand between Billy Copeland and Farley's money.

She told the servants she would send for her trunk and instructed them to wrap up Mrs. Farley's portrait and hold it until she had asked Thurston's permission to remove it. She hurried to the car, carrying the will with her. She must, of course, show it to Thurston, but that could wait a day. . . .

First she would tell Fanny! It was only fair that Mrs. Copeland should know. Copeland had never been mentioned in their intercourse, but Nan determined to confess everything that had passed between her and Billy. She would not spare herself. She should have done it earlier—before Fanny threw the mantle of her kindness and generosity about her.

For a month she had been happy in the thought that all her troubles were behind her, and that she was free of the wreckage of her old life. Now it was necessary to readjust herself to a new condition, and she resented the necessity that compelled it. Her resolution to tell Fanny of this last will and of all that lay back of it remained unshaken as the car bore her homeward. It was the only "square" thing to do, she repeated to herself over and over again, as she looked out of the car window upon the gray winter landscape.

IN the next installment of "The Proof of The Pudding"—and, by the way, it is the final installment—Nan has her first talk about Billy with Mrs. Copeland. Can you imagine a more dramatic situation than that of this finely strung girl telling how nearly she came to marrying her benefactor's former husband? Read it as Mr. Nicholson tells it, in the May issue, on the news-stands April 22nd.

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THE GRIZZLY

A NEW ANIMAL NOVEL BY JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

Continued from page 1148 of this issue.

ing the preceding night. Muskwa hurried after.

A hundred yards up the slope, Thor stopped and turned. Again he reared himself. Now Muskwa also faced to the north. A sudden downward drift of the wind brought the barking of the dogs to them clearly.

Less than half a mile away, Langdon's pack of trained Airedales were hot on the scent. Their baying was filled with the fierce excitement which told Bruce and Langdon, a quarter of a mile behind them, that they were close upon their prey.

And even more than it thrilled them did the tonguing of the dogs thrill Thor. Again it was instinct that told him a new enemy had come into his world. He was not afraid. But that instinct urged him to retreat, and he went higher until he came to a part of the mountain that was rough and broken, where once more he halted.

THIS time he waited. Whatever the menace was, it was drawing nearer with the swiftness of the wind. He could hear it coming up the slope that sheltered the basin from the valley.

The crest of that slope was just about on a level with Thor's eyes, and as he looked, the leader of the pack came up over the edge of it and stood for a moment outlined against the sky. The others followed quickly, and for perhaps thirty seconds they stood rigid on the cap of the hill, looking down into the basin at their feet and sniffing the heavy scent with which it was filled.

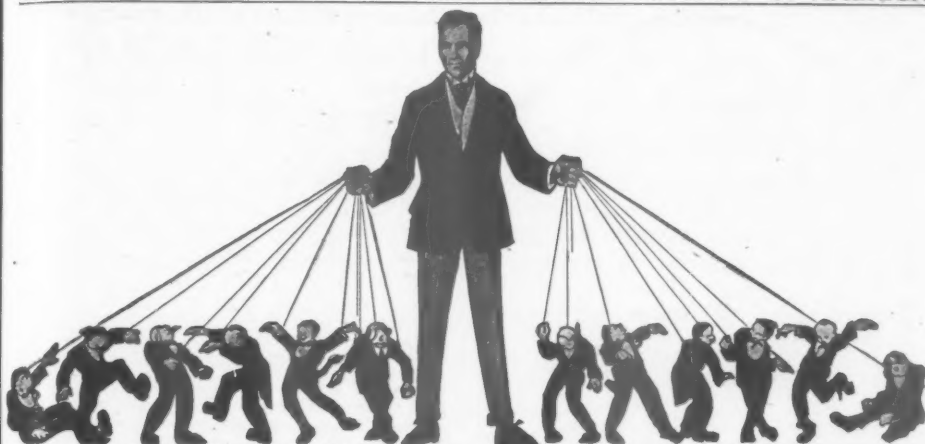
During those thirty seconds Thor watched his enemies without moving, while in his deep chest there gathered slowly a low and terrible growl. Not until the pack swept down into the cup of the mountain, giving full tongue again, did he continue his retreat. But it was not flight. He was not afraid. He

was going on—because to go on was his business. He was not seeking trouble; he had no desire even to defend his possession of the meadow and the little lake under the mountain. There were other meadows and other lakes, and he was not naturally a lover of fighting. But he was ready to fight.

He continued to rumble ominously, and in him there was burning a slow and sullen anger. He buried himself among the rocks; he followed a ledge with Muskwa slinking close at his heels; he climbed over a huge scarp of rock, and twisted among boulders half as big as houses. But not once did he go where Muskwa could not easily follow. Once, when he drew himself from a ledge to a projecting seam of sandstone higher up, and found that Muskwa could not climb it, he came down and went another way.

THE baying of the dogs was now deep down in the basin. Then it began to rise swiftly, as if on wings, and Thor knew that the pack was coming up the green slide. He stopped again, and this time the wind brought their scent to him full and strong. It was a scent that tightened every muscle in his great body and set strange fires burning in him like raging furnaces. With the dogs came also the *man smell*!

He traveled upward a little faster now, and the fierce and joyous yelping of the dogs seemed scarcely a hundred yards away when he entered a small open space in the wild upheaval of rock. On the mountain-side was a wall that rose perpendicularly. Twenty feet on the other side was a sheer fall of a hundred feet, and the way ahead was closed, with the exception of a trail scarcely wider than Thor's body, by a huge crag of rock that had fallen from the shoulder of the mountain. The big grizzly led Muskwa close up to this crag and the break that



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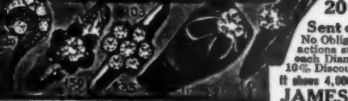
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opened through it, and then turned suddenly back, so that Muskwa was behind him. In the face of the peril that was almost upon them, a mother bear would have driven Muskwa into the safety of a crevice in the rock wall. Thor did not do this. He fronted the danger that was coming, and reared himself up on his hind quarters.

Twenty feet away the trail he had followed swung sharply around a projecting bulge in the perpendicular wall, and with eyes that were now red and terrible, Thor watched the trap he had set.

The pack was coming in full tongue. Fifty yards beyond the bulge the dogs were running shoulder to shoulder, and a moment later the first of them rushed into the arena which Thor had chosen for himself. The bulk of the horde followed so closely that the first dogs were flung under him as they strove frantically to stop themselves in time.

With a roar Thor launched himself among them: His great right arm swept out and inward, and it seemed to Muskwa that he had gathered half of the pack under his huge body. With a single crunch of his jaws he broke the back of the foremost hunter. From a second he tore the head so that the windpipe trailed out like a red rope.

He rolled himself forward, and before the remaining dogs could recover from their panic he had caught one a blow that sent him flying over the edge of the precipice to the rocks a hundred feet below. It had all happened in half a minute, and in that half-minute the remaining nine dogs had scattered.

But Langdon's Airedales were fighters. To the last dog they had come of fighting stock, and Bruce and Metoosin had trained them until they could be hung up by their ears without whimpering. The tragic fate of three of their number frightened them no more than their own pursuit had frightened Thor.

Swift as lightning they circled about the grizzly, spreading themselves on their forefeet, ready to spring aside or backward to avoid sudden rushes, and giving voice now to that quick, fierce yapping which tells hunters their quarry is at bay. This was their business—to harass and torment, to retard flight, to

stop their prey again and again until their masters came to finish the kill. It is a quite fair and thrilling sport for the bear and the dogs. The man who comes up with the rifle ends it in murder.

BUT if the dogs had their tricks, Thor also had his. After three or four vain rushes, in which the Airedales eluded him by their superior quickness, he backed slowly toward the huge rock beside which Muskwa was crouching, and as he retreated the dogs advanced.

Their increased barking and Thor's evident inability to drive them away or tear them to pieces terrified Muskwa more than ever. Suddenly he turned tail and darted into a crevice in the rock behind him.

Thor continued to back until his great hips touched the stone. Then he swung his head sidewise and looked for the cub. Not a hair of Muskwa was to be seen. Twice Thor turned his head. After that, seeing that Muskwa was gone, he continued to retreat until he blocked the narrow passage that was his back-door to safety.

The dogs were now barking like mad. They were drooling at their mouths; their wiry crests stood up like brushes, and their snarling fangs were bared.

Nearer and nearer they came to him, challenging him to stay, to rush them, to catch them if he could—and in their excitement they put ten yards of open space behind them. Thor measured this space, as he had measured the distance between him and the young bull caribou a few days before. And then, without so much as a snarl of warning, he darted out upon his enemies with a suddenness that sent them flying wildly for their lives.

Thor did not stop. He kept on. Where the rock wall bulged out, the trail narrowed to five feet, and he had measured this fact as well as the distance. He caught the last dog, and drove it down under his paw. As it was torn to pieces, the Airedale emitted piercing cries of agony that reached Bruce and Langdon as they hurried panting and wind-broken up the slide that led from the basin.

Thor dropped on his belly in the narrow trail, and as the pack broke loose with fresh voice he continued to tear at his victim until the rock was smeared with blood and hair and entrails. Then he rose to his feet and looked again for Muskwa. The cub was curled up in a shivering ball two feet in the crevice. It may be that Thor thought he had gone on up the mountain, for he lost no time now in retreating from the scene of battle. He had caught the wind again. Bruce and Langdon were sweating, and their smell came to him strongly.

FOR ten minutes Thor paid no attention to the eight dogs yapping at his heels, except to pause now and then and swing his head about. As he continued in his retreat the Airedales became bolder, until finally one of them sprang ahead of the rest and buried his fangs in the grizzly's leg.

This accomplished what barking had failed to do. With another roar, Thor turned and pursued the pack headlong for fifty yards over the back-trail, and five precious minutes were lost before he continued upward toward the shoulder of the mountain.

Had the wind been in another direction the pack would have triumphed, but each time that Langdon and Bruce gained ground the wind warned Thor by bringing to him the warm odor of their bodies. And the grizzly was careful to keep that wind from the right quarter. He could have gained the top of the mountain more easily and quickly by quartering the face of it on a back-trail, but this would have thrown the wind too far under him. As long as he held the wind he was safe, unless the hunters made an effort to checkmate his method of escape by detouring.

It took him half an hour to reach the topmost ridge of rock, from which point he would have to break cover and reveal himself as he made the last two or three hundred yards up the shale side of the mountain to the backbone of the range.

When Thor made this break he put on a sudden spurt of speed that left the

dogs thirty or forty yards behind him. For two or three minutes he was clearly outlined on the face of the mountain, and during the last minute of those three he was splendidly profiled against a carpet of pure white snow.

Bruce and Langdon saw him at five hundred yards, and began firing. Close over his head Thor heard the curious ripping wail of the first bullet, and an instant later came the crack of the rifle.

A second shot sent up a spurt of snow five yards ahead of him. He swung sharply to the right. This put him broadside to the marksmen. Thor heard a third shot—and that was all.

While the reports were still echoing among the crags and peaks, something struck Thor a terrific blow on the flat of his skull, five inches back of his right ear. It was as if a club had descended upon him from out of the sky. He went down like a log.

It was a glancing shot. It scarcely drew blood, but for a moment it stunned the grizzly, as a man is dazed by a blow on the end of the chin.

Before he could rise from where he had fallen, the dogs were upon him, tearing at his throat and neck and body. With a roar Thor sprang to his feet and shook them off. He struck out savagely, and Langdon and Bruce could hear his bellowing as they stood with fingers on the triggers of their rifles waiting for the dogs to draw away far enough to give them the final shots.

Yard by yard Thor worked his way upward, snarling at the frantic pack, defying the man-smell, the strange thunder, the burning lightning—even death itself, and five hundred yards below, Langdon cursed despairingly as the dogs hung so close he could not fire.

Up to the very sky-line the blood-thirsting pack shielded Thor. He disappeared over the summit. The dogs followed. And after that their baying came fainter and fainter as the big grizzly led them swiftly away from the menace of man in a long and thrilling race from which more than one was doomed not to return.

The story of that race is in the next installment of "The Grizzly," in the May issue, on the news-stands April 22nd.

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THE THIRTEENTH COMMANDMENT

A NEW NOVEL BY RUPERT HUGHES

Continued from page 1086 of this issue.

He'll be mighty glad to start up his factory again, and several hundred idle workers will be mighty glad for a new chance at work, and so will their poor families. I tell you again once for all, there was nothing wrong in Wetherell's behavior, absolutely nothing. It's outrageous that you should accuse me of such horrible things."

She was crying—crying very caressably; and she was close enough to topple over and sob into his neck. And after all he was human; a husband usually is.

In a moment he was embracing her and imploring her forgiveness. He was coerced into having his life saved by his enemy. It was one thing, however, to consent to deal with Wetherell, and another to devise a tolerable reconciliation.

"All you've got to do is to make up with him," said Leila brightly.

Very dark was Bayard's tone.

"All I've got to do is to say to this man I despise: 'I told you awhile ago that if you came near my wife, I'd beat you up. Now I find that you have a job to give me; so please forget what I said, and come see my wife every day.'"

Bayard hated nothing so much as having to eat his words. If only he had not spoken to Wetherell! If he had pretended to be blind! He was troubled with all the motives that restrain the complacent husband.

He told himself that he had not the slightest justification for his suspicion of Leila, beyond the outrageous theory that a wife who would go out riding with a man not her husband would ride on as far as the man liked. This was medieval cynicism, but he had yielded to it, and acted on it.

The more he longed for the contracts that Wetherell controlled, the more his gorge rose at asking him for them.

Leila, the resourceful, seeing and appreciating the paralysis of his will, found a way round as usual.

"I'll call on Mrs. T. J. B.," she said.

"Do you know her?" Clay exclaimed.

"Yes—do you?" said Leila.

"Of course. She was the one who introduced me to Wetherell."

And now it was Daphne's turn to flash up with jealousy.

"Where did you meet that awful creature?"

"How do you know she is awful?" Clay countered.

"Didn't I meet her and ride with her in Wetherell's car?"

"Good Lord, I didn't know you knew Wetherell. And when were you in his car?"

It seemed as if all the cats in the world were escaping from all the bags in the world and organizing a wholesale Kilkenny. Daphne had to confess.

"I've had no chance to tell you: the day I went motoring with Mr. Duane, we were run into and Mr. Wetherell happened along and took us in his car as far as Yonkers."

"Only as far as Yonkers?" Clay broke in with recrudescing suspicion. "Why not all the way to town? Duane wanted to be alone with you, I suppose."

"I suppose so!" Daphne answered with a sigh of disgust, scorning to explain that Wetherell had been bound in the opposite direction. "Anyway, Mrs. T. J. B.—your friend Mrs. T. J. B.—was in the car with Mr. Wetherell. So I met her. And since you are so suspicious, you might explain where Mrs. T. J. B. was when you met her yourself?"

Clay answered with the helpless superiority of a born New Yorker for an immigrant from any direction:

"I suppose she was leaning over my baby carriage in Central Park. I was about the same age as her daughter Pet Bettany. We haven't known each other very well, for I couldn't keep up with the rich gang, and she has hung on some-

An illustration depicting a theater scene. In the upper left, a group of people are shown in profile, looking towards the right. A large, ornate key is positioned diagonally across the center of the advertisement. In the lower right, a woman is seated, and a man is kneeling beside her, attending to her foot. The entire scene is framed by a decorative border.

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how. Well, in New Jersey I met a man who spoke of war munition contracts in the air, and he knew somebody who knew that Mrs. T. J. B. had a hand in it. It meant so much that I looked her up. And she confessed that she had this young English officer in tow and she was helping him—for a consideration. She welcomed me and offered me as many contracts as I could place—for old friendship's sake, and a commission. The dear soul is getting commissions in all directions."

"What relation is she to Wetherell?"

"It's none of my business. I didn't ask her."

"Why?"

"I was afraid she might tell me."

The four sat in a quartette of discord, until Clay looked at his watch and said:

"In the meanwhile the Allies are anxiously scanning the horizon looking for our munitions."

"And my creditors are anxiously scanning their mail looking for checks from my empty bank account."

"You can fill that bank account to millionaire proportions if you'll only get busy," said Clay.

"Well," Bayard sighed, "beggars can't be choosers. If I'd saved my money, I shouldn't have to take Wetherell's money, but since I blew it in on speculation and high living, I've got to take anybody's I can find, if I have to go out and sandbag somebody."

BAYARD called up the president of his company at the office. When he left the telephone, he was a new man. He had cunningly raised his chief's hopes to the highest degree, yet withheld the name of the English agent. He explained that he intended to take Leila's advice and use his knowledge as a lever for his own advancement, and Clay's.

So elated he was with his importance as the rescuer of his firm and the guardian of millions of dollars, that he even forgave Wetherell.

"I'm not going to let a little obstacle like six feet of Englishman keep me from being rich and powerful. Wetherell needs me as much as I need him, and I

guess I told him all that was necessary to square him for any ideas he may have had about my wife."

Leila's eyes hardened again, as if she did not quite like Bayard in this humor. But she was glad of any compromise he might make with his temper. He turned to her to say:

"You needn't call on any old Mrs. T. J. B., Leila. I'll take the blame for what I've done and I'll meet Wetherell as man to man—at least, as business man to business man."

She liked him a trifle better for that. But Clay promised to save him from any embarrassment by closing the contracts for Bayard's firm without involving Bayard's name.

Clay and Bayard sat down to make figures, and the talk grew too technical for the women to endure. Daphne stole out unheeded and went up to her own room.

Mr. Chivvis was sitting by a window in mournful idleness. Mrs. Chivvis was stitching away at her embroidery.

She was cheerful—for her. She told Daphne that she had found a market for her needlework; the prices were poor, but they were real. She advised Daphne to get to work with her.

Daphne had not the courage to say that her brother and her betrothed were about to become plutocrats. She said only that she was very tired. And there is no more exhausting drain on the nerves than their response to unexpected good news. It is more fatiguing than bad.

Daphne flung herself on her bed in her dark room and let her weary thoughts gambol. There was no further temptation in Duane's money now. She was to have money in her own family. Her brother would be rich. Her lover would be rich. Then a harsh thought—she was not really engaged to Clay. They had quarreled. He had hated her. He had expressed his distrust of her. He could buy a wife among the loftiest aristocrats now. Undoubtedly he would jilt her.

Still, Bayard would have money. He would take care of her. Of course, he had his wife and his father and mother—perhaps Leila's father and mother

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would need help. But there would surely be enough to keep his sister. In fact, he'd be so rich that Clay might well be proud to be related to him by marriage.

And then she groaned and wriggled. Here she was again—debating what man should support her! What man should give her glory! Where were her dreams of independence?—of self-sustenance? She was going to lift herself by her own Oxford ties, and she had only pulled out the bowknots.

CHAPTER LV

IN those days of immeasurably majestic crimes and virtues and triumphs and privations, the United States of America suddenly woke to the fact that they could save themselves from their own bankruptcy by helping the benighted states of Europe to continue their mutual devastation.

The long panic that preceded the war had been free from the old curse of private hoarding. It was the banks that hoarded. Their coffers ached with useless funds. The newly created system of national reserve banks increased and mobilized the store. Then came the call to use them in the manufacture of battle wares and in speculation. The stock exchanges where a few brokers had long swapped stories of bad luck became football fields. Cots were put in offices so that exhausted clerks might take brief naps at midnight where principals had lately snoozed at noon. Meals were eaten at desks. The well-nigh forgotten million-share days became the habitual thing.

There were sudden geysers of fortune and sudden collapses of failure. As in bonanza days, many were ruined while the few prospered. But Clay and Bayard seemed to touch nothing that did not turn to gold. Bayard had gained immense prestige with his firm because of the huge orders he brought in. He took all the power that was accorded and grasped for more. His most reckless audacities were rewarded with success. He rode on a tidal wave and swam with it so well that all his progress seemed to be due to his own power.

Clay rushed forward with even greater velocity. He refused to accept his old place in the office, though he was invited to take it with increased salary and authority. But he felt that he could do better on his own. And he was free. He had no family to take his hours, his emotions or his funds.

He arranged the business with Wetherell so that Bayard did not meet him at all until so much time had passed that when at length they encountered each other their quarrel was ignored as something that had never happened.

Bayard was frantically busy; he took only occasional meals at the apartment, but he slept there except when his business called him out of town. He slept like an old man, too exhausted with other emotions to have zest for love or laughter.

While Bayard was accepting the moneys that the eager bankers thrust upon him, he had bethought him to borrow enough for his own living expenses on a more liberal scale. He ransomed Leila's jewels from captivity and bought her better as well, and once when he missed a theater party he had promised to enjoy with her, his peace offering was a bouquet of greenbacks fresh culled from the mint. He blithely forgot the Thirteenth Commandment and excused his extravagances by pointing to his uncontrollable success.

He reduced the insolent butcher to groveling homage by paying all his bill at once. He astounded Dutilh with the solution of that old account and with a cash payment for new gowns in celebration of his new glory.

He did not forget his own people. He telegraphed his mother a thousand dollars and almost slew her with amazement. He telegraphed his father simply the price of a railroad ticket to New York and a peremptory summons to take the first train east.

When he told Daphne of this she had to sit down to keep from falling down. Bayard resuscitated her with a check for a thousand dollars. It meant nothing more to her than *abracadabra*. The whole incredible alteration was a fairy story. She made a faint attempt to refuse the gift, but Bayard forced it back



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into her palm and closed her fingers on it.

Gradually she understood that she was a millionairess to the extent of a whole thousand dollars, and then she began to weep deliciously. She felt so sorry for all she had been through and all the things these thousand guardian angels might have saved her from, that she almost hated them for arriving so late.

But she repaid Bayard with kisses. Then she borrowed from him enough cash to pay her moss-grown bill with the Chivvises. Bayard took the amount from a bundle of bills as big and sweet as a jelly-roll.

Daphne could not wait for the elevator. She ran up several flights of stairs, scratched the door with her palsied latch-key, and flung herself into Mrs. Chivvis' arms, and kissed her—even Mrs. Chivvis.

Being kissed confused Mrs. Chivvis almost more than being paid. She took the money with a quivering hand and turned to her husband to say:

"You see, dear, prayers are answered after all."

Mr. Chivvis looked on the handful of bills as a parcel of manna, and Daphne as a specially credentialed white raven to deliver it. He could not speak, and Mrs. Chivvis could hardly mumble:

"You don't know what this means to us just now. I'm so glad you never paid us before. Everything always turns out for the best, doesn't it?"

"Does it?" Daphne smiled non-committally, and did not tell her that the money was the direct result of the devil's bloody carnival in Europe. Instead, she flaunted before her the check bearing the heavenly legend commanding the Fifth Avenue Bank to "pay to Daphne Kip, or order, one thousand and no hundredths dollars" on penalty of incurring the displeasure of Bayard Kip.

Mrs. Chivvis handled the parchment with reverence and permitted her husband to touch it. It might have been one of the golden leaves of the sacred Book of Mormon and she a sealed wife of Brigham himself.

"What are you planning to do with all this?" she said at length.

"I don't know," said Daphne. "I'd frame it in place of my first fifty, but I think it's bad luck to frame a check. I'd send it home, but Mamma has one just like it and Daddy is coming over tomorrow to get his. What would you suggest?"

"You were planning to go into business; why not use this as capital?"

"Fine! What business ought I to start?—banking? or battleship building? or what?"

"There's embroidery," said Mrs. Chivvis.

Daphne had to laugh at that. Mrs. Chivvis did not laugh. "I mean it," she urged; "think it over."

"All right, I'll think it over. But let's go to the theater somewhere together; not to a cheap movie, but to—how would you like to go to grand opera? That's the most expensive thing open to the public to-night."

The Chivvises protested, but Daphne dragged them to the Metropolitan—after borrowing back enough of her money to pay for the tickets and the cabs.

CHAPTER LVI

THAT night Daphne slept with her thousand-dollar check under her pillow. It insured sweeter dreams than a piece of wedding cake. She slept on and on till Mrs. Chivvis' thimble clacked on the door and Mrs. Chivvis' voice respectfully informed the wealthy changeling that her father was in her brother's apartment having his breakfast.

Daphne came out of the bed with something the effect of a screw-propeller breaking loose from its crank-shaft. She went into her clothes in a series of dives, and raced to Bayard's apartment, and pounced on her father with all girlishness of welcome. She saw on his face that glow of trust he had worn in the faded photograph, and she thanked God again that she was still what her father would wish her to be.

He could not know what temptations had gathered about her, and she was glad. She was glad that he would not know of her despairs and her adventures

with Gerst. Now that everybody was glorious with money, it was best of all that he had not known.

He was dazed enough with what Bayard had been telling him. He was tremulous with the change in the air. Bayard was no longer a desperate beggar of alms from a helpless father. He was a young prince in golden armor riding down a bannered street and tossing largess on either hand.

Daphne was invited to breakfast and she made a picnic of it. Leila waited on the table. She had not got in a new maid. She was looking for a French couple to butle and cook. Bayard was impatient to get to business. His office was waiting for him and he wanted to set his father to work.

Wesley Kip could hardly believe what he was hearing. Bayard was ordering his father to sign a number of munition contracts and telegraph to Cleveland to open his factory and reassemble his dispersed employees. Wesley protested that the Allies could have no possible use for Kip's Kalkulators.

"Of course not," Bayard roared. "You are to make war supplies. You've got machinery and skilled labor, and those are what the Allies can't find at home. There are a hundred parts to a rifle. They need millions of rifles. You could make firing-pins or sight-leaves or windage-screws or triggers or sleeve-locks or sear-springs, bolts—anything."

"It seems kind of terrible for me at my time of life to set to work making things to kill people with—poor fellows I never saw, sons of sad old mothers and fathers, and husbands with children waitin' for 'em, and nice young fellows with nice young girls in love with 'em."

"I know!" Bayard said; "it's all hideous. But it's life, and history, and there's always been war and always will be. And it may come in handy for the United States to mobilize its resources and learn how to make war."

Mr. Kip was thrilled more perhaps by the ardor of his son than by his reasons, but he answered fervently:

"All right! I'm with you! We'll turn out Kips Kattridges in place of Kips Kalkulators."

He embraced Bayard and called him

a "good old scout." Leila and Daphne laughed, and an aureole of wealth shone about them all.

"And now," said Bayard, "we'll go down and meet Mr. Clay Wimburn. He is one of our risingest young billionaires. He will show you what to do, and where to put your signature, and you can take the Lake Shore Limited home with your pockets bulging with gold. Some change from the last trip, eh, Dad?"

Wesley shook his head as if he were one of the lost Babes in the Wood. The only familiar sound was the name of Clay Wimburn. That suggested something.

"Clay Wimburn? You don't tell me! And doing well, eh? I suppose this will hurry up the wedding now, Daphne?"

He chuckled and Daphne smiled and patted his back as one pats the backs of children who ask embarrassing questions. Daphne fancied that the wedding which had been postponed by poverty would be probably canceled altogether by too much riches.

Who was she that the darling of fortune should marry her? When they had first met and philandered, he was hardly more than a clerk and she was a Cleveland of no importance.

Now he was the escort of Mrs. T. J. B. and the crony of Wetherell; he was the *Mowgli* of other social lionesses and of financial elephants. Clay and Daphne had endured too much shabbiness together; they had quarreled, economized, lost mutual novelty; they had yawned together.

Now that Clay was accepted as the lost heir of success, he would seek for a new love in the new fields.

The proof of it was that Clay never mentioned marriage on the few occasions when he called on Daphne, or met her by accident.

CHAPTER LVII

IT has been divinely or otherwise arranged that every prosperity shall have its asperity. America had profoundly changed from a huddle of dazed and affrighted witnesses of carnage, to a people so busy with its own concerns



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but yours is the first I've ever seen," said a patron to J. J. Williams when he saw the double profits Williams was making as operator and agent for Ten-Pinnet, world's greatest bowling game. New, fascinating, everybody plays! Automatic—no pin boys required—just someone to take in money. Alleys 38 to 50 ft. long, set up in any room in half-day. Valuable premiums to interest bowlers—we furnish coupons. Moderate investment will start you.



Write Now for Catalog and Agents Prices.

The Ten-Pinnet Company, 48 Van Buren St., Indianapolis, Ind.

In writing to advertisers it is of advantage to mention THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

that it hardly cared how the war news ran.

The bulletin boards lost their throngs. The chronicle of the capture of half a dozen cities made less impression than the earlier destruction of one of the fortresses of Liège. The newspapers at last discontinued their bulletins. People were unmoved by the loss of ten thousand men in a single day.

But nothing availed to check the influx of war orders, or the swollen flood of wealth. New York, the first of the cities to feel the old hard times, was the first to respond to the new good times. It began to quiver with the spirit of the mining camp or the oil settlement when a great lode or a subterranean petroleum lake has been struck, and when sudden wealth is dangled within reach of the humblest grubber.

Not all who clutched caught; not all who caught profited. Bayard and Clay were of those who did. But they would take no recreation, lest some abrupt cataclysm of the rocking planet should bring down their towers of Babel, or at least suck back into the earth these rivers of wealth.

"Make hay while the sun shines," Bayard would answer the protesting Leila. And he made hay while the moon shone, or the stars, or the electric lights in his office, or in the clubs, where he transacted business.

The novelty of being rich lost its savor with Leila, and the monotony of being neglected began to prey upon her damask soul. She and Daphne forgot their mutual grievances for their common grievance.

"That's the trouble with these husbands," Leila grumbled. "When they're in bad luck you can't lose 'em; and when they're in good, you can't find 'em."

"It's the same with fiancés," said Daphne.

Daphne had the worse of it, for Leila began to wander again, leaving Daphne to the society of Mrs. Chivvis, who kept urging her to invest her thousand before it should be spent. But in the environs of these noisy riches, the schemes of Mrs. Chivvis demanded such prolonged labor for such minute profit that Daphne remained cold.

IN her angrier revolts against Bayard's neglect; Leila sometimes frankly confessed that she was seeing a good deal of Mrs. T. J. B. and of Wetherell. She was dancing nearly every night somewhere—and there were so many somewheres.

She was buying new costumes with her old recklessness, and Bayard was glad to bribe her silence with gifts of cash or with hasty checks for bills that he hardly scanned. Above all things he wanted her to let him alone for a while, since big anxieties and hazards accompanied his big profits or hopes of them.

Daphne began to resent Clay's neglect morosely. The few attentions he paid her only insulted her; his mind was far away, and his heart was all for his business. He was dazzled by the fierce white light of success and he spoke to Daphne in a kind of drowsy hypnosis. And he spoke incessantly of the details of his business or his gambblings. She yawned in his face when he grew ardent on the dynamics of wealth, the higher philosophies of finance. And he never knew. He kissed her good-by as if he were kissing a government bond, safe and quiet and all his own; and he never dreamed that a revolution was seething in that government which might render that bond what many another treaty had proved to be, a scrap of paper.

Finally, of course, Duane came back. Daphne rebuffed him several times, but he grew more pathetic in his appeals, and she yielded at length more in pity for him than for herself. She would not go motoring with him, however. The shock of that collision and the grazing of death or crippleddom had destroyed the charm of the pastime.

So she received Duane in the Chivvis' living-room, once or twice. He was entirely uncomfortable there, but she would not go out with him. At last one day Mrs. Chivvis went marketing, and he knew that they were alone again. He lost no time in precipitating himself on Daphne's mercy.

"I want to apologize, Miss Kip, for what I said to you that night in the car. I deserved to be battered up worse than I was. I told you that I loved you, and that was true—and is. And I told

you I wasn't a marrying man, and I wasn't; and I'll never be unless you'll marry me.

"You've simply infected my brain with misery for you. I love you so infernally much, that I'd even marry you—if you'd have me. I'd go that far! Honestly! In spite of all I know against matrimony, I'll jump into it, if you'll dive with me."

She laughed at his peculiar flattery and shook her head. He growled:

"Oh, I know all about Wimburn. But he's married to somebody else."

"What!" Daphne gasped.

"He's wedded to his art, the fine art of getting rich. And the cub will do it. He's crazy drunk with the game, and he's got a run of luck that nothing seems to stop. He may go broke and he may shoot up until he out-Schwabs Morgan. But he's lost to you."

"You can see he doesn't need you. And I do. I'm dying for you—simply curling up and dying. I've got money enough for us both, and it's invested so I don't have to worry about it. You and I can talk and think of something else. Clay Wimburn is as anxious about money as a fish on land is about air. He can't stop gulping for it. But I'm not thinking of it and you oughtn't to be. I'm gulping about you. I'm on your hook and I wish you'd either throw me back in the water or kill me and eat me. Will you? Please? for the Lord's sake, eh?"

His extravagance made her smile; his adoration made her glow with pride; but his longing for her touched her heart again as before—only more deeply, since she no longer felt the restraint of a rival pity for Clay.

Clay did not need her now. Luck was his poodle dog on a string, following him everywhere, and not often to Daphne's home.

She had learned from Bayard's business talk why her mother had lost interest in her father's business talk. She had wondered if their life would be of the same sort, if Clay would become one of those husbands who bring their shops home with them and sell goods to their wives all evening.

Life with Duane offered every attraction, especially as she knew nothing

of the life in his circle. She did not know what tediums a life of leisure might hold. She had the normal hankering to explore the smart realms and dwell on the aristocratic plateau.

The last word Duane could have said was the one he proceeded to say:

"Will you come to lunch with me to-morrow?"

"Certainly not."

"Oh, aren't we correct? But we are not to be alone. We are to be chaperoned with the greatest severity."

Daphne thought of Leila's duenna, Mrs. T. J. B.

"Who is she?" she asked with raillery. Duane answered with a tender solemnity.

"My mother."

Daphne had heard of Mrs. Duane, had seen her picture in the magazines, her white hair like an ermine royalty upon her beautiful head. Duane went on:

"I've told her how wonderful you are, and she doesn't believe me. I dared her to lunch with you. She accepted." I dare you to lunch with her. Will you?"

"I never take a dare," said Daphne, trying to keep from shrieking with joy at her flight upward on the social rocket. "Yes, of course. Certainly."

"Till to-morrow then, good-by," said Duane, and squeezed her hand hard. And she responded with a pressure invigorated by her gratitude for a delicate attention.

CHAPTER LVIII

ALL afternoon Daphne went singing. She was to meet the great, the ancient of birth, people whose grandfathers had had money and bequeathed it. She had no mania for social advancement; yet she was not abnormally unwilling to meet the high-fashioned. She had known Duane; but then aristocratic men make friends with women of all grades; there is no prestige for a woman in knowing a male swell—there may be a distinct lack of prestige in it. Prestige for women comes from the women they know.

Daphne felt that she must not underdress the occasion. She must show

Note This ad appears only once in this publication. Cut it out **NOW!** Save it! Even if you do not intend to paint this season some day you will, and you'll be glad to have this to refer to when making your plans.

Vital to House Owners

SPECIAL OFFER

To the first house owner in each town painting with Zinolin after reading this ad, we offer 10% reduction on the cost of the Zinolin used—and unqualifiedly guarantee Zinolin to be just as revolutionary in every respect as claimed in our descriptive LEAFLET.

This LEAFLET is yours for the asking. Write for it. Inform yourself about Zinolin, the "Wonder Paint," before you paint. Know why Zinolin saves you money—why its brilliant luster lasts indefinitely, making your buildings always look newly painted. Know why Zinolin protects better—why its dazzling whiteness cannot be duplicated in any other outside paint—why its colors never fade no matter how delicate the tint when colors are used. Know these things. It will take but one second—it will cost but one cent to write—and know the greatest achievement in all paint history. Then you'll realize fully why you should use



ZINOLIN

"Arnold-ized" zinc paint

Years before putting Zinolin on the market—even before we tried it out along the seacoast—where the climate is most severe on paint—we knew we had an unusual product. But we, ourselves, were surprised to find how completely revolutionary Zinolin is. Zinolin has caused a genuine sensation. No one thought cracking, chalking, peeling and fading could be entirely overcome. No one thought the life of paint could be nearly doubled—or perhaps—they didn't think about it at all, but just asked their painters to "paint" without specifying any particular paint. That's why you owe it to yourself to write for our LEAFLET—to learn all about Zinolin—and to specify this wonderful paint—made only by the Arnold secret process—the only all "Arnold-ized" Zinc Paint in the world.

KEYSTONA—another of our products. Winner of the highest award at the Panama Exposition. The first-created, washable flat-tone finish for walls and interior woodwork. Imitated—but unsuccessfully. Justly famous for its soft,

artistic colorings, extreme durability and big covering capacity. Costs slightly more by the gallon but less for the number of square yards covered. Economical. Hygienic. Use it instead of wall paper.

CERTIFIED PAINTERS. We have arranged with dependable painters in nearly every town who will not substitute other paints when you ask for Zinolin or Keystone, and who know just how to apply them. We will gladly give you the name of our CERTIFIED PAINTER in your town, if we have one, or will communicate with your painter if you send us his name.

WRITE NOW. Don't delay or you may forget—and this whole matter of paints is most vital to you. Send for complete information, giving us your painter's name, to-day.

ZINOLIN and KEYSTONA are always obtainable at all Paint Stores and most Hardware Dealers.

KEYSTONE VARNISH COMPANY

Established 1828

N. B. ARNOLD, President

1690 Keystona Building, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Duane's mother! This was her coming-in party. She went through her wardrobe and it was hopeless. She had not a gown that would not condemn her to the contempt of the very waiters. She must use that beautiful bank account. She thought of Dutilh. He would have beautiful things, divine novelties.

She went to him. He hailed her with familiarity that shocked her.

"Hello! Come to get that job? Well, I need you this very minute."

Daphne flushed. She hated to think that she had ever been poor, and had asked for a job as a model. She answered a bit snappishly: "No, indeed. I've come to buy the prettiest frock you have. And I'll pay cash for it."

"My God!" Dutilh cried, "what's come over this town? There's no talking to people. They're paying bills and offering cash! They'll drive me out of business at this rate. Well, I'll sell you a gown, but I won't let you pay cash for it."

Daphne flushed again. She realized that it would be more swagger to start an account.

And now she was in Dutilh's power. She made a last effort to impress him.

"I must have the gown at once, as I am lunching with Mrs. Barclay Duane to-morrow."

This did not seem to overpower Dutilh. He was studying Daphne between interlocked eyelashes. He walked round her as if she were a horse for sale. Daphne became burningly self-conscious.

"Want to see my teeth and my left fore-foot?" she demanded.

Dutilh did not answer. He was placing her among imaginary colors and fabrics. At length he nodded. "I think I've got just the thing for you, my dear. You're lunching with Mrs. Duane, you said. I know just what she likes. If she doesn't rave over it, tell her I made it."

He went away, and soon a gown was walked in, a gown that made Daphne almost swoon with satisfaction. It was the very textile of her soul woven and dyed. She hated the model for desecrating it with her embodiment. She could hardly wait to get into it herself. It fulfilled her dreams. The creature she saw in the mirror was just what she wanted

to be. It took all her self-control to permit a few revisions. She could hardly bear to denude herself of that integument long enough to have some of the bastings affirmed. She went home in a swirl.

That night Bayard was detained by a meeting. Leila had a dinner engagement out. When Daphne asked if it were with Wetherell, Leila drew down her eyelids as mysterious blinds.

The Chivvies went out too. It was prayer-meeting night at their church. They had taken up their religion with new fervor since the war had answered their prayers for a little money.

Daphne was left alone. But she was not lonely, after that absolute gown arrived.

She put it on and promenaded and posed and tried to look down over her shoulders. She was practicing siren attitudes on an imaginary Duane, and experimenting for expressions to try on his mother. She would play grande demoiselle to that grande dame.

And then Clay Wimburn telephoned. In pique, she was about to plead another engagement. But she felt that she would like to have him see her in that gown. She would like to tell him that she was lunching with a nobler and a better woman than his Mrs. T. J. B. So she had him up.

CHAPTER LIX

DAPHNE had known several Clay Wimburns since the first one came to Cleveland. She had hardly met the latest edition of him.

He had reason to be proud. He had brought wealth to Bayard and to Bayard's father and to many people who had done him little kindnesses. He had made his janitor and his laundress comfortable for life. He had set the smoke to curling from long-empty chimneys. He had mobilized armies of laborers, and filled a myriad dinner-pails. Yet he had been, as any other general is, the prisoner of the army he led.

He had thought constantly of Daphne and planned to spend a great deal of time with her—when he could



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and you'll find the right solution to your problems. "PIPER" gives you real tobacco satisfaction and helpful, cheerful comfort that a man needs to bring his efficiency up to top-notch. That's the reason famous architects, lawyers, judges and scientists chew

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5c and 10c cuts, foil-wrapped, in slide boxes. Also 10c cuts, foil-wrapped, in metal boxes. Sold everywhere.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY

get a little. But he had seemed to be able to capture anything he wanted except leisure. How could he devote an evening to sweethearting when he was implored to spend it at the Bankers' Club with a group of almost tearful plutocrats? When he had an evening free his fatigue would fall upon him like a thousand of brick and he would sleep druggedly, sometimes on a club divan, sometimes at his own apartments with his shoes and collar on.

He had the market to watch, as well. His first commissions he devoted to speculation. Bethlehem Steel had been as low as 18. Clay got aboard at 30 with a thousand dollars. He bought outright, and his thirty-three shares went on up and up, and down and up till eventually they reached 459, when he became alarmed at their wild gyrations and sold them for fifteen thousand dollars.

With the second thousand dollars he bought on margin. He chose Electric Boat at 13 and pyramided as it rose. Eventually he "cleaned up" with a hundred thousand dollars. Some of his ventures lost him money in sums that would have crushed him with debt for years under his ordinary conditions. But now he smiled and forgot.

Other men grew richer than he; men of larger capital or better information heaped up millions. Men who guessed wrong were wrecked utterly. These were times that made the Roaring Forties of the California gold fever look tame, as the battles in Europe made Gettysburg seem but a reconnaissance in force.

The most gorgeous color in the fabric of Clay's dreams was his future life with Daphne as Mrs. Wimburn. But he kept setting forward the day when he should lead her to the high peak of his wealth and tell her that all she saw or wished was hers. He kept enlarging the amount that should be enough. And this was all from love of her. While he seemed to be neglecting her, she was growing more precious in his esteem. He was like a gold miner who lingers for just one more nugget before he turns homeward. Sometimes that miner never does get home.

Clay had not told Bayard of his con-

tracts till he had them nailed. So now he did not visit Daphne till he was secure. He wanted to astound her with the splendor of his tribute.

Daphne's pride had kept her from showing how hurt she was. She had treated him with all the more gayety so that he should not suspect her dismay and her humiliation. And he, the golden fool, had never noticed.

To-night, however, he came to her with his plans perfected. When she opened the door for him with a formal bow, he did not notice her new dress or her stately frigidity.

He caught her in his arms with such ardor that he frightened her. He had grown something of a stranger. His clasp and his rudely proprietary kiss shocked her. He did not even notice that.

He began rhapsodically: "Well, honey, I've got somewhere at last. I made a killing to-day and I've brought home the bacon. I've got my bank-books here and when you see 'em, you'll drop dead.

"Honey love, I'm a rich man and you're a rich lady. I've just put aside a big chunk for you. Time and time again I've stood in front of jewelers' windows and planned to buy you a bit of rock, but I said 'No, not yet; invest it for her.' And I did.

"I've kept account of what was yours and what it won, and now you can buy the gorgeousest trousseau that ever was trousseed. And I want you to. And as soon as it's ready, I am. And there's the proof."

He seized her hand in his and kissed it and slid something on her ring finger and held it before her eyes, and said:

"How is that for high? Pretty bad, eh? If you don't like it you can exchange it for another."

Daphne looked down at her hand and saw the wonder of a huge diamond among a blur of lesser diamonds. It was as if a drop of dew, vast for a dewdrop, had formed upon her finger and a spider had fastened it there with a mesh of platinum gossamers. It was so beautiful that it brought diamonds to her own eyes.

She caught it in her other hand with

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The symphony of its floral fragrance typifies not the crash of cymbals, nor yet the grandeur of stringed pieces—but rather the simplicity of a sweet voice singing—

*"O! Mavis, Mavis, Mavis,
The birds are calling you sweet."*

Toilet Water 75c; Extract \$1.00; Face Powder 50c; Talcum 25c.

*Send 15c to Vivaudou, (Dept. 14, Times Building,
N. Y.) for a generous sample of Mavis Extract.*

Vivaudou
New York. Paris.

a little gasp of awe. It was so big that it would have been vulgar if it had been more than a sublime distillation of water, living, shivering, light-splintering water.

Daphne could not speak, but Clay was garrulous.

"It's a little better than the old one, eh?—the old one that I couldn't pay for? Golly, but times have changed. I had to return our first ring because I couldn't finish the hundred-dollar payment. I tossed a two-thousand-dollar check across Tiffany's counter for that and never blinked. Forgive me. I didn't mean to put a price-tag on it; but I'm kind of crazy with joy.

"And now we're going to get married, aren't we? And no more foolishness about your waiting till you can buy your own trousseau, eh? It was sweet foolishness, but we won't have any more of it, will we?"

She felt another little stab, but not now of jewel-lust; now it was a stab of remorse. Clay had unwittingly recalled the old troop of ideals that had inspired her, and given her pride to face the world, and to fit herself to be her man's mate and not his plaything or his burden.

She was remembering all those things while he was reveling on.

"The poor little thing! She has gone through so much, given up so much! She has lived in rags, in this miserable shack! And she went about hunting for jobs at six dollars a week! But that's all over. No more work for my Daphne. You'll sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam and I'll feed you on strawberries, sugar and cream. Eh? Isn't that so? Why don't you say yes? Huh? Why don't you say yes?"

Daphne was wretched in every thought. To quench his spirit in its ecstasy was odious. And yet it seemed more odious to accept his generosity and give nothing for it but greed. She wanted fiercely to bring her husband something more than an appetite and an expense.

To put away the little hundred-dollar diamond had not been easy. To put away the larger gem was a score of times as hard. But what was she worth if she could resist a small bribe only to be bought with a big one? to be superior to gold but inferior to platinum?

Clay was pacing the floor recounting his financial adventures with such eloquence that he did not realize how still she was, or how far away, or how busy her brain.

When at last he reached the end of his peroration and turned to her for applause, he found her pretty features all askew; her eyes were crinkled and wet, and her chin crumpled and her lips like a child's about to bawl.

She was dragging the stubborn ring from her finger and blubbering:

"Take it back, please. I can't wear it. I just can't."

Clay came down to earth with such a thump as Icarus made when the wax melted from his wings.

He stared at Daphne with neither understanding nor sympathy, set his jaw hard, put his palm forth, accepted the ring as a sort of ironical tip, tossed it up and caught it two or three times, shoved it in his pocket, yawned "Ho-hum!" shoved his head into his hat, his arms into his overcoat, and let himself out in a silence that would have been perfect if the spring lock had not snapped with a vicious click.

And now what will happen? Will Daphne repent? or turn to Duane? The answer is simple but surprising. Follow the story in the next—the May—issue, on the news-stands April 22nd.

ESKAY'S MAIL BAG

"Making Motherhood Easy"

NOT so very long ago there was an anxious, nervous little woman way down south who was going to become a mother. She didn't know how to take care of herself before nor how to take care of the little stranger after he came. She was scared, panic-stricken as only a woman can be. Almost distracted, she finally wrote the Eskay Service Bureau. And the sequel—well, read this extract from her letter now in our files:

Dear Friend:—It just seemed to me when I wrote you that I could not live till the baby came. Everybody had frightened me so, but your beautiful letter with its practical advice made me lose the horror of it, which was nearly driving me mad. I read the booklets you sent and did what they advised and my baby is just the loveliest baby you ever saw. No matter what anyone else says, my husband and I know that the miracle was worked by your books and advice. . . . Oh, how I wish every frightened, half-sick prospective mother would bring her troubles to you and the Service Bureau as I did.

Gratefully yours, E. S. L.

Are you, perhaps, a half-anxious prospective mother, too, dreading what is to come, making yourself unhappy and running the chance of having a fretful baby, hard to care for and with health impaired?

Eskay's Service Bureau has been developed for just such as you. Before we started it, the subject was under discussion by experts for days. How could we best help the mothers and prospective mothers? What did they most need?

After the most serious consideration it was finally agreed that nothing in the entire field of babyology was so important as the question of feeding. We decided that nothing we could do would accomplish so much toward safeguarding the health and happiness of both babies and mothers as to spread, far and wide, the knowledge of how and what to feed the baby.

And on that subject it is not what we can tell you that counts for so much—we are only a unit. It is what the happy mothers of beautiful, healthy Eskay babies can tell you—and they are thousands. All you interested mothers can't write to one another personally, no matter how much you want to help, so Eskay's Service Bureau has developed into a sort of clearing house for putting mothers in touch with each other—an Eskay's Mail Bag for carrying your letters back and forth.

And if you could only read all these letters that keep pouring in from all parts of the country, your faith in Eskay's Food would be so great you would never think of trying to bring up your baby, whose health is so precious, without it.

It is just that Eskay's Food has never failed these mothers. It has done exactly what they have prayed might be done for their babies. It has won their confidence and they want you to know that it is worth your confidence. Whether yours is a sick baby or a well baby, Eskay's Food supplies just the nourishment he ought to have. That has been proved so many times there is no room for doubt.

Eskay's Service Bureau for Mothers

We are trying to make Eskay's a complete service for mothers. We have had books written by authorities which will solve many of your problems, such as Prenatal Care, Hygiene and Sanitation, General Care and Feeding of the Baby. Most important of these books is "Making Motherhood Easy," which was written for us by Mrs. Anna Stesse Richardson, whom you know as one of the best friends mothers and babies ever had. If you haven't had your copy, write for it today. If you have, isn't there a friend you want one sent to?

I am proud to tell you that Eskay's Service Bureau has been given into my charge. I have a corps of experts as my assistants and together we are working for the babies with all our hearts and with all our time.

Won't you write to me and let me tell you how Eskay's Food will help your baby to be well, will help you to nurse your baby if you want to, will help so much toward making your motherhood easier and happier?

May Harding Lee
Director

And don't forget to fill in and send this coupon today

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SMITH, KLINE & FRENCH CO., 440 Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Please send me a copy of Mrs. Richardson's book, "Making Motherhood Easy," postpaid, without charge.

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Put this Garment on
the Credit side of your
books, Mr. Office Man

YOU will never have to
make an entry in the profit
and loss account of under-
wear comfort if you charge
yourself today with the impor-
tance of getting

THE
Hatch
ONE-Button
UNION SUIT

Ten useless buttons—ten bad debts—
are eliminated and in their place is one
master button that pays a handsome
profit all the time by insuring increased
underwear satisfaction. Cast up a trial
balance of your present underwear dis-
comforts and you'll be sure to put in a
requisition for this time and trouble
saving garment.

You can get these suits in nainsook, in
knit goods, or in the famous Keep-Kool
mesh, at the best haberdashers' and depart-
ment stores everywhere, but if you have the
least difficulty send your size with remittance
to the manufacturers at *Albany, N. Y.* and
we will gladly supply you direct; delivery
prepaid. Satisfaction guaranteed.

PRICES

Men's—Knitted or Nainsook

\$1, \$1.50, \$2.

Boy's—(Knitted only) 50 cents.

*A catalog illustrating the complete line of
summer and winter weights will be sent free
on request.*



THE ITEMIZED ACCOUNT

(An item for each button eliminated)

- 1 Perfect comfort
- 2 Perfect fit
- 3 Time saved
- 4 Temper kept
- 5 No gapping
- 6 Quality fabrics
- 7 No bunching
- 8 No lost buttons
- 9 No torn buttonholes
- 10 Splendid Workmanship



FULD & HATCH KNITTING COMPANY

ALBANY

Manufacturers

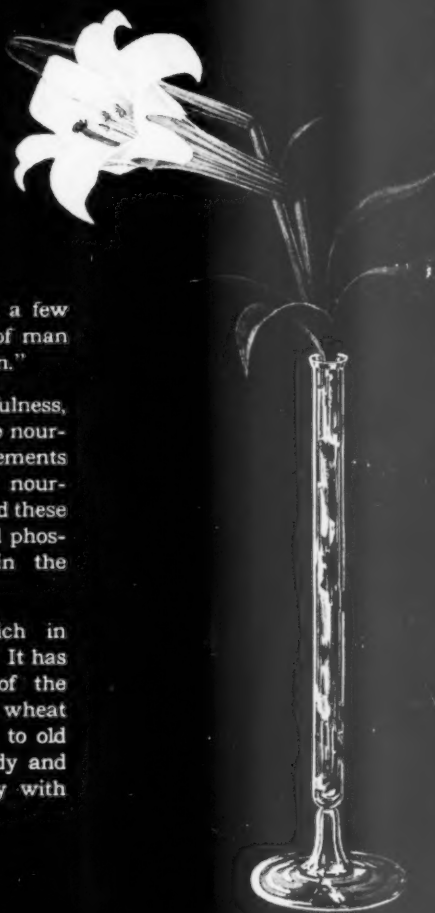
NEW YORK

Barnes Knitting Corporation, Sole distributor to dealers, 303 Fifth Avenue, New York City

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PRESS OF STEARNS BROS. & CO., CHICAGO

*"Consider the Lilies of the Field,
How They Grow"*



The life of the lily is but a few transient hours. The life of man is "three score years and ten."

But to live his life in its fulness, man—like the lily—must be nourished by those same vital elements which Nature provides for nourishing every living thing; and these include the valuable mineral phosphates so often lacking in the usual dietary.

Grape-Nuts food is rich in these wonderful elements. It has delicious taste, is made of the entire nutrition of whole wheat and barley, and from youth to old age, builds and rebuilds body and brain in beautiful harmony with Nature's perfect plan.

"There's a Reason" for Grape-Nuts

